Charles Reade

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"Colonel Dujardin walked quickly down between the two lines, looking with his fiery eye into the men's eyes on his right." — See page 261.

WHITE LIES.

A Novel.

By CHARLES READE.

HOUSEHOLD EDITION.

NEW YORK:
HARPER & BROTHERS, PUBLISHERS,
FRANKLIN SQUARE.
1877.

CHARLES READE'S NOVELS.

HARPER'S HOUSEHOLD EDITION.

Illustrated. 12mo, Cloth

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PUBLISHED BY HARPER & BROTHERS, NEW YORK.

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PR
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WHITE LIES.

CHAPTER I.

TOWARDS the close of the last century, the Baron de Beaurepaire lived in the chateau of that name in Brittany. His family was of prodigious antiquity. Seven successive barons had already flourished on this spot of France when a younger son of the house accompanied his neighbor the Duke of Normandy in his descent on England, and was rewarded by a grant of land, on which he dug a moat and built a chateau, and called it Beaurepaire; the worthy natives turned this into Borreper without an instant's delay. Since that day more than twenty gentlemen of the same lineage had held in turn the original chateau and lands, and handed them down to their present lord.

Thus rooted in his native Brittany Henri Lionel Marie St. Quentin de Beaurepaire was as fortunate as any man can be pronounced before he dies. He had health, rank, a good income, a fair domain, a goodly house, a loving wife, and two lovely young daughters all veneration and affection. Two months every year he visited the Faubourg St. Germain and the Court. At both every gentleman and every lackey knew his name and his face; his return to Brittany after this short absence was celebrated by a rustic *fête*.

Above all, Monsieur de Beaurepaire possessed that treasure of treasures, content. He hunted no heartburns. Ambition did not tempt him. Why should he listen to long speeches, and court the unworthy, and descend to intrigue, for so precarious and equivocal a prize as a place in the government, when he could be de Beaurepaire without trouble or loss of self-respect? Social ambition could get little hold of him. Let *parvenus* give balls half in doors half out, and light two thousand lamps, and waste their substance battling and manœuvring for fashionable distinction; he had nothing to gain by such foolery, nothing to lose by modest living; he was the twenty-ninth Baron of Beaurepaire. So wise, so proud, so little vain, so strong in health and wealth and honor, one would have said nothing less than an earthquake could shake this gentleman and his house. Yet both were shaken, though rooted by centuries to the soil.

But it was by no vulgar earthquake.

For years France had bowed in silence beneath two galling burdens: a selfish and corrupt monarchy, and a multitudinous, privileged, lazy, and oppressive aristocracy, by whom the peasant, though in France he is the principal proprietor of the soil, was handled like a Russian serf.

Now when a high-spirited nation has been long silent under oppression — tremble oppressors! The shallow misunderstand nations as they do men. They fear where no fear is, and play cribbage over a volcano. Such are they who expect a revolt in England whenever England grumbles

half a note higher than usual. They do not see that she is venting her ill-humor instead of bottling it, and getting her grievance redressed gradually and safely. Such is the old lady who pinches us when the engine lets off its steam with a mighty pother. Then it is she fears an explosion. Such are they who read the frothy bombast of Italian Republicans, and fancy that nation of song, superstition, and slavery is going to be free,— is worthy to be free, — has the heart or the brains or the soul to be free.

Such were the British placemen, and the pig-headed King, who read the calm, business-like, respectful, yet dignified and determined address of the American colonists, and argued thus: —

"What, they don't bluster; these then are men we can bully." *

Such were the French placemen, who did not see how tremendous the danger to that corrupt government and lawless aristocracy, when an ardent people raised their heads, after centuries of brooding, to avenge centuries of wrong.

We all know this wonderful passage of history. How the feeble king was neither woman, nor man — could neither concede with grace nor resist with cannon. How his head fell at a moment when it was monstrous to pretend the liberties of the nation ran any risk from the poor old cipher. How the dregs of the nation came uppermost and passed for "the people." How law, religion, common sense, and humanity hid their faces, the scaffold streamed with innocent blood, and terror reigned.

France was preyed on by unclean beasts, half ass, half tiger. They made her a bankrupt, and they were busy cutting her throat, as well as rifling her pockets, when Heaven sent her a Man.

He drove the unclean beasts off her suffering body, and took her in his hand, and set her on high among the nations.

But ere the Hero came, — among whose many glories let this be written, that he was a fighting man, yet ended civil slaughter, — what wonder that many an honest man and good Frenchman despaired of France. Among these was M. de Beaurepaire.

These Republicans — murderers of kings, murderers of women, and persecutors of children — were, in his eyes, the most horrible monsters Humanity ever groaned under.

He put on black for the King, and received no visits. He brooded in the chateau, and wrote and received letters; and these letters all came and went by private hands. He felled timber. He raised large sums of money upon his estate. He then watched his opportunity, and on pretence of a journey disappeared from the chateau.

Three months after, a cavalier, dusty and pale, rode into the court-yard of Beaurepaire, and asked to see the baroness; he hung his head, and held out a letter. It contained a few sad words from M. de Larochejaquelin. The baron had just fallen in La Vendee, fighting, like his ancestors, on the side of the Crown.

From that hour till her death the baroness wore black.

The mourner would have been arrested, and perhaps beheaded, but for a friend, the last in the world on whom the family reckoned for any solid aid. Doctor St. Aubin had lived in the chateau twenty years. He was a man of science, and did not care a button for money; so he had retired from the practice of medicine, and pursued his researches with ease under the baron's roof. They all loved him, and laughed at his occasional reveries, in the days of prosperity; and now, in one great crisis,

* Compare the manifestoes of Italian Republicans with the proclamations and addresses of the American colonists, — i. e. compare the words of the men of words with the words of the men of deeds, — the men who fail with the men who succeed; it is a lesson in human nature. They differ as a bladder from a bludgeon, or harlequin's sword from Noll Cromwell's.

the *protége* became the protector, to their astonishment and his own. But it was an age of ups and downs. This amiable theorist was one of the oldest verbal Republicans in Europe. This is the less to be wondered at that in theory a Republic is the perfect form of government. It is merely in practice that it is impossible; it is only upon going off paper into reality, and trying actually to self-govern old nations, with limited territory and time to heat themselves white hot with the fire of politics and the bellows of bombast, that the thing resolves itself into moonshine and bloodshed, — each in indefinite proportions.

Doctor St. Aubin had for years talked and written speculative Republicanism. So, not knowing the man, they assumed him to be a Republican. They applied to him to know whether the baroness shared her husband's opinions, and he boldly assured them she did not; he added, "She is a pupil of mine." On this audacious statement they contented themselves with laying a heavy fine on the lands of Beaurepaire.

Assignats were abundant at this time, but good mercantile paper — a notorious coward — had made itself wings and fled, and specie was creeping into strong-boxes, like a startled rabbit into its hole.

The fine was paid, but Beaurepaire had to be heavily mortgaged, and the loan bore a high rate of interest.

This was no sooner arranged than it transpired that the baron just before his death had contracted large debts, for which his estate was answerable.

The baroness sold her carriage and horses, and both she and her daughters prepared to deny themselves all but the bare necessaries of life, and pay off their debts if possible. On this their dependants fell away from them; their fair-weather friends came no longer near them; and many a flush of indignation crossed their brows, and many an aching pang their hearts, as adversity revealed to them the baseness and inconstancy of common people high or low. When the other servants had retired with their wages, one Jacintha remained behind, and begged permission to speak to the baroness.

"What would you with me, my child?" asked that high-bred lady, with an accent in which a shade of surprise mingled with great politeness.

"Forgive me, madame the baroness," began Jacintha, with a formal courtesy; "but how can I leave you and Mademoiselle Josephine, and Mademoiselle Laure? Reflect, madame; I was born at Beaurepaire; my mother died in the chateau; my father died in the village; but he had meat every day from the baron's own table, and fuel from the baron's wood, and died blessing the house of Beaurepaire — Mademoiselle Laure, speak for me! Ah, you weep! it is then that you see it is impossible I can go. Ah no! madame, I will not go; forgive me; I cannot go. The others are gone because prosperity is here no longer. Let it be so; I will stay till the sun shines again upon the chateau, and then you shall send me away if it seems good to you; but not now my ladies! O, not now! Oh! oh! oh!"

The warm-hearted girl burst out sobbing ungracefully.

"My child," said the baroness, "these sentiments touch me, and honor you. But retire if you please, while I consult my daughters."

Jacintha cut her sobs dead short, and retreated with a most cold and formal reverence.

The consultation consisted of the baroness opening her arms, and both her daughters embracing her at once.

"My children! there are then some who love you."

"No! you, mamma! It is you we all love."

Three women were now the only pillars, a man of science and a servant of all work the only outside props, the buttresses, of the great old house of Beaurepaire.

As months rolled on, Laure Aglae Rose de Beaurepaire recovered her natural gayety in spite of bereavement and poverty, — so strong are youth and health and temperament. But her elder sister had a grief all her own. Captain Dujardin, a gallant young officer, well born, and his own master, had courted her with her parents' consent; and even when the baron began to look coldly on the soldier of the Republic, young Dujardin, though too proud to encounter the baron's irony and looks of scorn, would not yield love to pique. He came no more to the chateau; but he would wait hours and hours on the path to the little oratory in the park, on the bare chance of a passing word or even a kind look from Josephine. So much devotion gradually won a heart which in happier times she had been half encouraged to give him; and when he left her on a military service of uncommon danger, the woman's reserve melted, and, in answer to his prayers and tears, she owned for the first time that she loved him better than anything in the world, — except duty and honor.

They parted in deep sorrow, but full of hope.

Woman-like she comforted him through her tears.

"Be prudent for my sake, if not for your own. May God watch over you! Your danger is our only fear; for we are a united family. My father will never force my inclinations; these unhappy dissensions will soon cease, and he will love you again. I do not say, 'Be constant.' I will not wrong either myself or you by a doubt; but promise me to come back in life, O Camille, Camille!"

Then it was his turn to comfort and console her. He promised to come back alive, and with fresh honors, and so more worthy the Demoiselle de Beaurepaire.

They pledged their faith to one another.

Letters from the camp breathing a devotion little short of worship fed Josephine's attachment; and more than one public mention of his name and services made her proud as well as fond of the fiery young soldier.

The time was not yet come that she could open her whole heart to her parents. The baron was now too occupied with the state to trouble his head about love fancies. The baroness, like many parents, looked on her daughter as a girl, though she was twenty years old. She belonged, too, to the old school. A passionate love in a lady's heart before marriage was with her contrary to etiquette, and therefore improper; and, to her, the great word "improper" included the little word "impossible" in one of its many folds. Josephine loved her sister very tenderly; but Laure was three years her junior, and she shrank with modest delicacy from making her a confidante of feelings the bare relation of which leaves the female hearer a child no longer.

Thus Josephine hid her heart, and delicious first love nestled deep in her nature, and thrilled in every secret vein and fibre. Alas! the time came that this loving but proud spirit thanked Heaven she had never proclaimed the depth of her attachment for Camille Dujardin.

They had parted two years, and he had joined the army of the Pyrenees about one month, when suddenly all correspondence ceased on his part.

Restless anxiety rose into terror as this silence continued; and starting and trembling at every sound, and edging to the window at every footstep, Josephine expected hourly the tidings of her lover's death.

Months rolled on in silence.

Then a new torture came. Since he was not dead, he must be unfaithful.

At this all the pride of her race was fired in her.

The struggle between love and ire was almost too much for nature.

Violently gay and moody by turns, she alarmed both her mother and the

good Doctor St. Aubin. The latter was not, I think, quite without suspicion of the truth; however, he simply prescribed change of air and place. She must go to Frejus, a watering-place distant about five leagues. Mademoiselle de Beaurepaire yielded a languid assent. To her all places were alike.

That same night, after all had retired to rest, came a low, gentle tap at her door; the next moment Laure came into the room, and, without saying a word, put down her candle and glided up to Josephine, looked her in the face a moment, then wreathed her arms round her neck.

Josephine panted a little: she saw something was coming; the gestures and looks of sisters are volumes to them.

Laure clung to her neck.

"What is the matter, my child?"

"I am not a child! there is your mistake. My sister, why is it you love me no longer?"

"I love you no longer?"

"No! We do not hide our heart from her we love; we do not try to hide it from her who loves us. We know the attempt would be in vain."

Josephine panted heavily; but she answered doggedly:—

"Our house is burdened with real griefs; is it for me to intrude vain and unworthy sentiments upon our sacred and honorable sorrows? O my sister, if you have really detected my folly, do not expose me! but rather help me to conceal and to conquer that for which your elder now blushes before you!"

And the proud beauty bowed her white forehead on the mantel-piece, and turned gently away from her sister.

"Josephine," said Laure, "I am young, but already I feel that all troubles are light compared with those of the heart. Besides, *we* share our misfortunes and our bereavement, and comfort one another. It is only you who are a miser, and grudge me my right,—a share of all your joys and all your griefs; but do you know that you are the only one in this chateau who does not love me?"

"Ah, Laure, what words are these? my love is older than yours."

"No! no!"

"Yes, my little fawn, your Josephine loved you the hour you were born, and has loved you ever since, without a moment's coldness."

"Ah! my sister!—my sister! As if I did not know it. Then you will turn your face to me?"

"See!"

"And embrace me?"

"There!"

"And, now, bosom to bosom, and heart to heart; tell me all?"

"I will—to-morrow."

"At least give me your tears; you see *I* am not niggardly in that respect."

"Tears, love,—ah! would I could!"

"By and by then; meantime do not palpitate so. See, I unclasp my arms. You will find me a reasonable person, indulgent even; compose yourself; or, rather, watch my proceedings; you are interested in them."

"It appears to me that you propose to sleep here!"

"Does that vex you?"

"On the contrary."

"There I am!" cried Laure, alighting among the sheets like a snow-flake on water. "I await you, mademoiselle."

Josephine found this lovely face wet, yet smiling saucily, upon her pillow. She drew the fair owner softly to her tender bosom and aching heart, and watched the bright eyes close, and the coral lips part and show their pearls in childlike sleep.

In the morning Laure, half awake, felt something sweep her cheek. She kept her eyes closed, and Josephine, believing her still asleep, fell to kissing her, but only as the south wind kisses the violets, and embraced her tenderly but furtively like a feather curling round a lovely head, caressing yet scarce touching, and murmuring,

"Little angel!" sighed gratitude and affection over her; but took great care not to wake her with all this. The little angel, who was also a litt'e fox, lay still and feigned sleep, for she felt she was creeping into her sister's heart of hearts. From that day they were confidantes and friends, as well as sisters, and never had a thought or feeling unshared.

Josephine soon found she had very few facts to reveal.

Laure had watched her closely and keenly for months. It was her feelings, her confidence, the little love wanted; not her secret, — that lay bare already to the shrewd young minx, — I beg her pardon, — lynx.

Give sorrow words. The grief that does not speak
Whispers the o'er-fraught heart, and bids it break.

A deep observer proclaimed this three hundred years ago, and every journal that is printed now-a-days furnishes the examples.

From this silent, moody, gnawing, maddening sorrow, Laure saved her elder sister. She coaxed her to vent each feeling as it rose; her grief, her doubt, her mortification, her indignation, her pride, and the terrible love that at times overpowered all.

Thus much was gained. These powerful antagonists were no longer cooped up in her bosom battling together and tearing her.

They returned from Frejus: Josephine with a delicate rose-tint instead of the pallor that had alarmed St. Aubin. Her mood fluctuated no more. A gentle pensiveness settled upon her. She looked the goddess Patience.

She was inconceivably lovely.

Laure said to her one day, after a long gaze at her: —

"I fear I shall never hate that madman as I ought. Certainly when I think of his conduct, I could strike him in the face." Here she clenched her teeth, and made her hand into a sort of irregular little snowball. "But when I look at you I cannot hate, I can but pity that imbecile — that — "

"O my sister," said Josephine, imploringly, "let us not degrade one we have honored with our esteem, — for our own sakes, not his," added she, hastily, not looking Laure in the face.

"No! forgive my vivacity. I was going to tell you I feel more pity than anger for him. Does he mean to turn monk, and forswear the sex? if not, what does he intend to do? Where can he hope to find any one he can love after you? Josephine, the more I see of our sex, the more I see that you are the most beautiful woman in France, and by consequence in Europe."

The smile this drew was a very faint one.

"Were this so, surely I could have retained a single heart."

"You have then forgotten your La Fontaine?"

"Explain."

"Does he not sing how a dunghill cock found a pearl necklace, and disdained it. And why? Not that pearls are worth less than barley-corns; but because he was a sordid bird, and your predecessors were wasted on him, my Josephine. So I pity that dragoon who might have revelled in the love of an angel, and has rejected it, and lost it forever. There, I have made her sigh."

"Forgive me."

"Forgive her? for sighing? I am, then, very tyrannical."

One day Laure came into the room where the baroness, Doctor St. Aubin, and Josephine were sitting.

She sat down unobserved.

But Josephine, looking up a minute after, saw at a glance that something had happened. Laure, she saw, under a forced calmness, was in great emotion and anxiety. Their eyes met. Laure made her a scarce perceptible signal, and immediately after got up and left the room.

Josephine waited a few seconds; then she rose and went out, and found Laure in the passage, as she expected.

"My poor sister, have you courage?"

"He is dead!" gasped Josephine.

"No! he lives. But he is dead to us and France. O Josephine, have you courage?"

"I have," faltered Josephine, quivering from head to foot.

"You know Dard, who works about here for love of Jacintha? For months past I have set him to speak to every soldier who passes through the village."

"Ah! you never told me."

"Had you known my plan, you would have been forever on the *qui vive;* and your tranquillity was dear to me. It was the first step to happiness. Hundreds of soldiers have passed, and none of them knew him even by name. To-day, Josephine, two have come that know all!"

"All! O Laure, Laure!"

"He is disloyal to his country. What wonder he is a traitor to you!"

"It is false!"

"The men are here. Come, will you speak to them?"

"I cannot. But I will come; you speak: I shall hear."

They found in the kitchen two dismounted dragoons before whom Jacintha had set a bottle of wine.

They arose and saluted the ladies.

"Be seated, my brave men," said Laure, "and tell me what you told Dard about Captain Dujardin."

"Don't stain your mouth with the captain, my little lady. He is a traitor!"

"How do you know?"

"Marcellus! Mademoiselle asks us how we know Captain Dujardin to be a traitor. Speak!"

Marcellus, thus appealed to, told Laure, after his own fashion, that he knew the captain well; that one day the captain rode out of the camp, and never returned; that at first great anxiety was felt on his behalf, for the captain was a great favorite, and passed for the smartest soldier in the division; that after a while anxiety gave place to some very awkward suspicions, and these suspicions it was his lot and his comrade's here to confirm. About a month later he and the said comrade and two more had been sent, well mounted, to reconnoitre a Spanish village. At the door of a little inn they had caught sight of a French uniform. This so excited their curiosity that he went forward nearer than prudent, and distinctly recognized Captain Dujardin seated at a table drinking, between two guerillas; that he rode back and told the others, who then rode up and satisfied themselves it was so; that if any of the party had entertained a doubt, it was removed in an unpleasant way. He, Marcellus, disgusted at the sight of a French uniform drinking among Spaniards, took down his carabine and fired at the group as carefully as a somewhat restive horse permitted, at which, as if by magic, a score or so of guerillas poured out from Heaven knows where, musket in hand, and delivered a volley: the officer in command of the party fell dead, Jean Jacques got a broken arm, and his own horse was wounded in two places, and fell from loss of blood a few furlongs from the French camp, to the neighborhood of which the vagabonds pursued them hallooing and shouting and firing like barbarous banditti as they were.

"However, here I am," concluded Marcellus, who was naturally more interested in himself than in Captain Dujardin, "invalided for a while, my little ladies, but not expended yet: we will soon dash in among them again for death or glory! Meantime," concluded he, filling both glasses, "let us drink to the eyes of beauty (military salute), and to the renown of France, — and double damnation to all her traitors, like that Captain Dujardin, — whose neck may the Devil twist."

In the middle of this toast Josephine, who had stood rooted to one place with eyes glaring upon each speaker in turn, uttered a feeble cry like a dying hare, and crept slowly out of the

room with the carriage and manner of a woman of fifty.

Laure's first impulse was to follow Josephine, but this would have attracted attention to her despair. She had the tact and resolution to remain and say a few kind words to the soldiers, and then she retired and darted up by instinct to Josephine's bedroom. The door was locked.

"Josephine! Josephine!"

No answer.

"I want to speak to you. I am frightened, — oh! do not be alone!"

A choking voice answered: —

"I am not alone, — I am with God and the saints. Give me a little while to draw my breath."

Laure sank down at the door, and sat close to it, with her head against it, sobbing bitterly. The sensitive little love was hurt at not being let in, such a friend as she had proved herself. But this personal feeling was but a small fraction of her grief and anxiety.

A good half-hour had elapsed when Josephine, pale and stern as no one had ever seen her till that hour, suddenly opened the door. She started at sight of Laure couched sorrowful on the threshold; her stern look relaxed into tender love and pity; she sank on her knees and took her sister's head quickly to her bosom.

"O my little heart!" cried she, "have you been here all this time?"

"Oh! oh! oh!" was all the little heart could reply.

Then Josephine sat down, and took Laure in her lap, and caressed and comforted her, and poured words of gratitude and affection over her like a warm shower.

The sisters rose hand in hand.

Then Laure suddenly seized Josephine, and looked long and anxiously down into her eyes. They flashed fire under the scrutiny.

"Yes," she replied, "it is ended. I could not despise and love. I am dead to him, as he is dead to France."

"Ah! I hoped so, — I thought so; but you frightened me. My noble sister, were I ever to lose your esteem I should die. O, how awful yet how beautiful is your scorn! For worlds I would not be that Cam— "

Josephine laid her hand imperiously on Laure's mouth.

"To mention that man's name to me will be to insult me! De Beaurepaire I am, and a Frenchwoman! Come, love, let us go down and comfort our mother."

They went down; and this patient sufferer and high-minded conqueror of her own accord took up a commonplace work, and read aloud for two mortal hours to her mother and St. Aubin. Her voice never wavered.

To feel that life is ended, — to wish existence, too, had ceased; and so to sit down, an aching hollow, and take a part and sham an interest in twaddle to please others, — such are woman's feats. How like nothing at all they look!

A man would rather sit on the buffer of a steam-engine and ride at the great Redan.

Laure sat at her elbow, a little behind her, and turned the leaves, and on one pretence or other held Josephine's hand nearly all the rest of the day. Its delicate fibres remained tense like a greyhound's sinews after a race, and the blue veins rose to sight in it, though her voice and eyes were mastered.

So keen was the strife, so matched the antagonists, so hard the victory!

For ire and scorn are mighty.

And noble blood in a noble heart is a hero.

And Love is a Giant.

CHAPTER II.

About this time, the French provinces were organized upon a half-military plan, by which all the local

authorities radiated towards a centre of government. This feature has survived subsequent revolutions and political changes.

In days of change, youth is always at a premium; because, though experience is valuable, the experience of one order of things unfits ordinary men for another order of things. A good many old fogies in office were shown to the door, and a good deal of youth and energy infused into the veins of provincial government.

For instance, Citizen Edonard Riviere, who had just completed his education with singular *éclat* at a military school, was one fine day ordered into Brittany to fill a responsible post under the Commandant Raynal.

Nervousness in a new situation generally accompanies talent. The young citizen, as he rode to present his credentials at head-quarters, had his tremors as well as his pride; the more so as his new chief was a blunt, rough soldier, that had risen from the ranks, and bore a much higher character for zeal and moral integrity than for affability.

While the young citizen rides in his breeches and English top-boots, his white waistcoat and cravat, his abundant shirt-frill, his short-waisted blue coat with flat gilt buttons, his pig-tail, his handsome though beardless face and eager eyes, to this important interview, settling beforehand what he shall say, what shall be said to him, and what he shall reply, let us briefly dispose of the commandant's previous history.

He was the son of a widow that kept a grocer's shop in Paris. She intended him for spice, but he thirsted for glory, — kept running after the soldiers, and vexed her. "Soldiering in time of peace," said she; "such nonsense, — it is like swimming on a carpet." War came and robbed her satire of its point. The boy was resolute. The mother yielded now; she was a Frenchwoman to the backbone.

In the armies of the Republic, a good soldier rose with unparalleled certainty, and rapidity too; for when soldiers are being mowed down like oats, it is a glorious time for such of them as keep their feet.

Raynal rose through all the intervening grades to be a commandant and one of the general's *aides-du-camp*, and a colonel's epaulets glittered in sight. All this time, Raynal used to write to his mother, and joke her about the army being such a bad profession, and as he was all for glory, not money, he lived with Spartan frugality, and saved half his pay and all his prize-money for the old lady in Paris.

And here, this prosperous man had to endure a great disappointment; on the same day that he was made commandant, came a letter into the camp. His mother was dead after a short illness. This was a terrible blow to the simple, rugged soldier, who had never had much time nor inclination to flirt with a lot of girls, and toughen his heart.

He came back to Paris honored and rich, but downcast.

On his arrival at the old place, it seemed to him not to have the old look. It made him sadder. To cheer him up, they brought him a lot of money. The widow's trade had taken a wonderful start the last few years, and she had been playing the same game as he had, living on tenpence a day and saving all for him. This made him sadder.

"What have we both been scraping all this dross together for? I would give it all to sit one hour by the fire, with her hand in mine, and hear her say, 'Scamp, you made me unhappy when you were young, but I have lived to be proud of you.'"

He found out the woman who had nursed her, flung more five-franc pieces into her lap than she had ever seen in one place before, applied for active service, no matter what, obtained at once this post in Brittany, and went gloomily from Paris, leaving behind him the reputation of an

ungracious brute, devoid of sentiment. In fact, the one bit of sentiment in this Spartan was anything but a romantic one; at least, I am not aware of any successful romance that turns on filial affection; but it was an abiding one. Here is a proof. It was some months after he had left Paris, and, indeed, as nearly as I can remember, a couple of months after young Riviere's first interview with him, that, being in conversation with his friend Monsieur Perrin the notary, he told him he thought he never should cease to feel this regret.

The notary smiled incredulous, but said nothing.

"We were fools to scrape all this money together; it is no use to her, and, I am sure, it is none to me!"

"Is it permitted to advise you?" asked his friend, persuasively.

"Speak!"

"This very money which your elevated nature condemns may be made the means of healing your wound. There are ladies, fair and prudent, who would at once capitulate — he! he! — to you, backed, as you are, by two or three hundred thousand francs. One of these, by her youth and affection, would in time supply the place of her your devotion to whose memory does you so much credit. That sum would also enable you to become the possessor of an estate, — a most advisable investment, since estates are just now unreasonably depressed in value. Its wood and water would soothe your eye, and relieve your sorrow by the sight of your wealth in an enjoyable form!"

"Halt! say that again in half the words!" roared the commandant, roughly.

The notary said it short.

"You can buy a fine estate and a chaste wife with the money," snapped this smooth personage, substituting curt brutality for honeyed prolixity. (*Aside*) "Marriage contract so much, — commission so much."

The soldier was struck by the propositions the moment they hit him in a condensed form, like his much-loved bullets. He

> Granted half his prayer,
> Scornful the rest dispersed in empty air.

"Have I time to be running after women?" said he. "But the estate I'll have, because you can get that for me without my troubling my head."

"Is it a commission, then?" asked the other, sharply.

"*Parbleu!* Do you think I speak for the sake of talking?"

No man had ever a larger assortment of tools than Bonaparte, or knew better what each could do and could not do. Raynal was a perfect soldier as far as he went, and therefore was valued highly. Bonaparte had formed him, too; and we are not averse to our own work.

Raynal, though not fit to command a division, had the *chic* Bonaparte visibly stamped on him by that master-hand.

For a man of genius spits men of talent by the score. Each of these adopts one or other of his many great qualities, and builds himself on it. I see the *maréchals* of the empire are beginning to brag, now everybody else is dead. Well, dissect all those *maréchals*, men of talent, every one of them, and combine their leading excellences in one figure, and add them up: Total, — *a Napoleonetto.**

"Who is that? I am busy writing."

"Monsieur the Commandant, I am the citizen Riviere, I am come to present myself to you, and to —"

"I know — come for orders."

* I mean, of course, as far as soldiering goes; but soldiering was only a part of the man, a brilliant part which has blinded some people as to the proportions of this colossal figure. He was a profound, though, from necessity, not a liberal statesman, a great civil engineer, a marvellous orator in the boudoir and the field, a sound and original critic in all the arts, and the greatest legislator of modern history.

"Exactly, commandant."

"Humph! Here is a report just sent in by young Nicole, who fills the same sort of post as you, only to the northward. Take this pen and analyze his report, while I write these letters."

"Yes, commandant."

"Write out the heads of your analysis. . . . . Good: it is well done. Now take your heads home and act under them; and frame your report by them, and bring it me in person next Saturday."

"It shall be done, commandant. Where are my quarters to be?"

The commandant handed him a pair of compasses, and pointed to a map on which Riviere's district was marked in blue ink.

"Find the centre of your district."

"This point is the centre, commandant."

"Then quarter yourself on that point. Good day, citizen."

This was the young official's first introduction to the *chic* Bonaparte. He rather admired it.

"This is a character," said he; "but by St. Denis, I should not like to commit a blunder under his eye."

Edouard Riviere had zeal, and he soon found that his superior, with all his *brusquerie*, was a great appreciator of that quality. His instructions, too, were clear and precise. Riviere lost his misgivings in a very few days, and became inflated with the sense of his authority and merit, and the flattery and obsequiousness that soon wait on the former.

The commandant's compasses had pointed to the village near Beaurepaire, as his future abode.

The chateau was in sight from his apartments, and, on inquiry, he was told it belonged to a Royalist family, — a widow and two daughters, who held themselves quite aloof from the rest of the world.

"Ah!" said the young citizen, who had all the new ideas, and had been sneering four years at the old *régime*. "I see. If these *rococo* citizens play that game with me, I shall have to take them down."

Thus, a fresh peril hung over this family, on whose hearts and fortunes such heavy blows had fallen.

One evening, our young Republican officer, after a day spent in the service of the country, deigned to take a little stroll to relieve the cares of administration. He accordingly imprinted on his beardless face the expression of a wearied statesman, and in that guise strolled through an admiring village.

The men pretended veneration from policy.

The women, whose views of this great man were shallower but more sincere, smiled approval.

The young puppy affected to take no notice of either sex.

Outside the village, Publicola suddenly encountered two young ladies, who resembled nothing he had hitherto met with in his district. They were dressed in black, and with extreme simplicity; but their easy grace and composure, and the refined sentiment of their gentle faces, told at a glance they belonged to the high nobility. Publicola, though he had never seen them, divined them at once by their dress and mien, and, as he drew near, he involuntarily raised his hat to so much beauty and dignity, instead of just poking it with a finger *à la République*. On this, the ladies instantly courtesied to him after the manner of their party, with a sweep and a majesty, and a precision of politeness, that the pup would have laughed at if he had heard of it; but seeing it done, and well done, and by lovely women of high rank, he was taken aback by it, and lifted his hat again, and bowed again after he had gone by, which was absurd, — and was generally flustered. In short, instead of a member of the Republican Government saluting private individuals of a decayed party, that existed only by sufferance, a handsome, vain, good-natured boy had met two self-possessed young ladies of high rank and breeding, and

had cut the figure usual upon such occasions.

For the next hundred yards, his cheeks burned, and his vanity was cooled.

But bumptiousness is elastic in France as in England and among the Esquimaux.

"Well, they are pretty girls," says he to himself. "I never saw two such pretty girls together, — they will do for me to flirt with while I am banished to this Arcadia." (Banished from school!)

And "awful beauty" being no longer in sight, Mr. Edouard resolved he would flirt with them to their hearts' content.

But there are ladies with whom a certain preliminary is required before you can flirt with them. You must be on speaking terms with them first. How was this to be managed?

"O, it would come somehow or other if he was always meeting them; and really a man that is harassed, and worked as I am, requires some agreeable recreation of this sort."

"Etc."

He used to watch at his window with a telescope, and whenever the sisters came out of their own grounds, which unfortunately was not above three times a week, he would throw himself in their way by the merest accident, and pay them a dignified and courteous salute, which he had carefully got up before a mirror in the privacy of his own chamber.

In return he received two reverences that were to say the least as dignified and courteous as his own, though they had not had the advantage of a special rehearsal.

So far so good. But a little circumstance cooled our Adonis's hopes of turning a bowing acquaintance into a speaking one, and a speaking into a flirting.

There was a flaw at the foundation of this pyramid of agreeable sequences.

Studying the faces of these courteous beauties, he became certain that no recognition of his charming person mingled with their repeated acts of politeness.

Some one of their humbler neighbors had the grace to salute them with the respect due to them: this was no uncommon occurrence to them even now. When it did happen, they made the proper return. They were of too high rank and breeding to be outdone in politeness.

But that the same person met them whenever they came out, and that he was handsome and interesting, — no consciousness of this phenomenon beamed in those charming countenances.

Citizen Riviere was first piqued and then began to laugh at his want of courage, and on a certain day when his importance was vividly present to him he took a new step towards making this agreeable acquaintance: he marched up to the Chateau de Beaurepaire and called on the baroness of that ilk.

He sent up his name and office with due pomp. Jacintha returned with a note black-edged: —

"*Highly flattered by Monsieur de Riviere's visit, the baroness informed him that she received none but old acquaintances in the present grief of the family and of the kingdom.*"

Young Riviere was cruelly mortified by this rebuff. He went off hurriedly, grinding his teeth with rage.

"Cursed aristocrats! Ah! we have done well to pull you down, and we will have you lower still. How I despise myself for giving any one the chance to affront me thus! The haughty old fool! if she had known her interest, she would have been too glad to make a powerful friend. These Royalists are in a ticklish position: I can tell her that. But stay, — she calls me De Riviere. She does not know who I am then! Takes me for some young aristocrat! Well then after all, — but no! that makes it worse. She implies that nobody without a 'De' to their name would

have the presumption to visit her old tumble-down house. Well, it is a lesson! I am a Republican and the Commonwealth trusts and honors me; yet I am so ungrateful as to go out of the way to be civil to her enemies, — to Royalists; as if those worn-out creatures had hearts, — as if they could comprehend the struggle that took place in my mind between duty and generosity to the fallen, before I could make the first overture to their acquaintance, — as if they could understand the politeness of the heart, or anything nobler than curving and ducking, and heartless etiquette. This is the last notice I will ever take of that family, that you may take your oath of ! ! ! !"

He walked home to the town very fast, his heart boiling and his lips compressed, and his brow knitted.

Just outside the town he met Josephine and Laure de Beaurepaire.

At the sight of their sweet faces his moody brow cleared a little, and he was surprised into saluting them as usual, only more stiffly, when lo! from one of the ladies there broke a smile so sudden, so sweet, and so vivid, that he felt it hit him on the eyes and on the heart.

His teeth unclenched themselves, his resolve dissolved, and another came in its place. Nothing should prevent him from penetrating into that fortified castle, which contained at least one sweet creature who had recognized him, and given him a smile brimful of sunshine.

That night he hardly slept at all, and woke very nearly if not quite in love.

Such was the power of a smile.

Yet this young gentleman had seen many smilers, but to be sure most of them smiled without effect, because they smiled eternally; they seemed cast with their mouths open, and their pretty teeth forever in sight, which has a saddening influence on a man of sense, — when it has any.

But here a pensive face had brightened at sight of him; a lovely countenance on which circumstances, not Nature, had impressed gravity, had sprung back to its natural gayety for a moment, and for him.

Difficulties spur us whenever they do not check us.

My lord sat at his window with his book and telescope for hours every day.

Alas! mesdemoiselles did not leave the premises for three days.

But on the fourth industry was rewarded: he met them, and, smiling himself by anticipation, it was his fate to draw from the lady a more exquisite smile than the last.

Smile the second made his heart beat so he could feel it against his waistcoat.

Beauty is power: a smile is its sword. These two charming thrusts subdued if they did not destroy Publicola's wrath against the baroness, and his heart was now all on a glow. A passing glimpse two or three times a week no longer satisfied its yearning. There was a little fellow called Dard who went out shooting with him in the capacity of a beater, — this young man seemed to know a great deal about the family. He told him that the ladies of Beaurepaire went to Mass every Sunday at a little church two miles off. The baroness used to go too, but now they have no carriage she stays at home. She won't go to church or anywhere else now she can't drive up and have a blazing lackey to hand her out, — "*Aristo va.*" *

Riviere smiled at this demonstration of plebeian bile.

Next Sunday saw him a political renegade. He failed in a prime article of Republican faith. He went to church.

The Republic had given up going to church: the male part of it in particular.

Citizen Riviere attended church and there worshipped — Cupid. He smarted for this. The young ladies went with higher motives, and took no notice of him. They lowered their

* Aristocrat go to!

long silken lashes over one breviary. and scarcely observed the handsome citizen.

Meantime he, contemplating their pious beauty with earthly eyes, was drinking long draughts of intoxicating passion.

And when after the service they each took an arm of St. Aubin, and he, with the air of an admiral convoying two ships choke-full of specie, conducted his precious charge away home, our young citizen felt jealous, and all but hated the worthy doctor.

One day Riviere was out shooting, accompanied by Dard.

A covey of partridges got up wild, and went out of bounds into a field of late clover.

"It is well done, citizen," shouted little Dard, "at present we are going to massacre them."

"But that is not my ground."

"No matter: it belongs to Beaurepaire."

"The last people I should like to take a liberty with."

"You must not be so nice; they have no gamekeeper now to interfere with us: they can't afford one. Aha! aristocrats! The times are changed since your pigeons used to devastate us, and we durst not shoot one of the marauders, — the very pheasants are at our mercy now."

"The more ungenerous would it be of us to take advantage."

"Citizen, I tell you everybody shoots over Beaurepaire."

"O, if everybody does it — "

In short Dard prevailed. A small amount of logic suffices to prove to a man of one-and-twenty that it is moral to follow his birds.

Our hero had his misgivings; but the game was abundant, and tamer than elsewhere.

In for a penny in for a pound. The next time they went out together, I blush to say he began with this very field of clover, and killed two brace in it. It was about four o'clock of this day when the sportsman and his assistant emerged from the fields upon the high road between Beaurepaire and the village, and made towards the latter.

They had to pass Bigot's *auberge*, a long low house all across which from end to end was printed in gigantic letters: —

"ICI ON LOGE A PIED ET A CHEVAL." *
"Here one lodges on foot and horseback."

Opposite this Dard halted and looked wistfully in his superior's face, and laid his hand pathetically on his centre.

"What is the matter? Are you ill?"

"Very ill, citizen."

"What is it?"

"The soldier's gripes," replied this vulgar little party; "and, citizen, only smell; the soup is just coming off the fire."

This little Dard resembled (in one particular) Cardinal Wolsey, as handed down to us by the immortal bard, and by the painters of his day: —

"He was a man of an unbounded stomach."

He had gone two hours past his usual feeding time, and was in pain and affliction.

Riviere laughed and consented.

"We will have it in the porch," said he.

The consent was no sooner out of his mouth than Dard dashed wildly into the kitchen.

Riviere himself was not sorry of an excuse to linger an hour in a place where the ladies of Beaurepaire might perhaps pass and see him in a new costume, — his shooting cap and jacket, adorned with all the paraphernalia of the sport, which in France are got up with an eye to ornament as well as use.

The soup was brought out, and for several minutes Dard's feelings were too great for utterance.

But Riviere did not take after the great cardinal, especially since he had fallen in love. He soon despatched a

* What a row the latter customers must make going up to bed!

frugal meal; then went in and got some scraps for the dog, and then began to lay the game out and count it. He emptied his own pocket and Dard's game-bag, and altogether it made a good show.

The small citizen was now in a fit state to articulate.

"A good day's work, citizen," said he, stretching himself luxuriously, till he turned from a rotundity to an oval; "and most of it killed on the lands of Beaurepaire, — all the better."

"You appear not to love that family, Dard."

"Your penetration is not at fault, citizen. I do not love that family," was the stern reply.

Edouard, for a reason before hinted at, was in no hurry to leave the place, and the present seemed a good opportunity for pumping Dard. He sent therefore for two pipes: one he pretended to smoke, the other he gave Dard: for this shrewd young personage had observed that these rustics, under the benign influence of tobacco, were placidly reckless in their revelations.

"By the by, Dard (puff), why did you say you dislike that family?"

"Because — because I can't help it; it is stronger than I am. I hate them, *aristo — va!*" (puff.)

"But why? — why? — why?"

"Ah! good, you demand why? — (puff). Well, then, because they impose upon Jacintha."

"Oh!"

"And then she imposes upon me."

"Even now I do not quite understand. Explain, Dard, and assure yourself of my sympathy" (puff).

Thus encouraged, Dard became loquacious.

"Those Beaurepaire aristocrats," said he, with his hard peasant good sense, "are neither one thing nor the other. They cannot keep up nobility, they have not the means, — they will not come down off their perch, they have not the sense. No, for as small as they are, they must look and talk as big as ever. They can only afford one servant, and I don't believe they pay her, but they must be attended on just as obsequious as when they had a dozen. And this is fatal to all us little people that have the misfortune to be connected with them."

"Why, how are you connected with them?"

"By the tie of affection."

"I thought you hated them."

"Clearly: but I have the ill luck to love Jacintha, and she loves these aristocrats, and makes me do little odd jobs for them"; and here Dard's eye suddenly glared with horror.

"Well! what of it?"

"What of it, citizen, what? you do not know the fatal meaning of those accursed words?"

"Why, it is not an obscure phrase. I never heard of a man's back being broken by little odd jobs."

"Perhaps not his back, citizen, but his heart? if little odd jobs will not break that, why, nothing will. Torn from place to place, and from trouble to trouble: as soon as one tiresome thing begins to go a bit smooth, off to a fresh plague, — a new handicraft to torment your head and your fingers over every day: in-doors work when it is dry, out a doors when it snows, — and then all bustle, — no taking one's work quietly, the only way it agrees with a fellow: no repose. 'Milk the cow, Dard, but look sharp; for the baroness's chair wants mending, — take these slops to the pig, but you must not wait to see him enjoy them; you are wanted to chop billets for me.' Beat the mats, — take down the curtains, — walk to church (best part of a league) and heat the pew cushions, — come back and cut the cabbages, paint the door, and wheel the old lady about the terrace, rub quicksilver on the little dog's back: mind he don't bite you to make himself sick! repair the ottoman, roll the gravel, clean the kettles, carry half a ton of water up three pair of stairs, trim the turf, prune the vine, drag the fish-pond, and when you *are* there, go in and

gather water-lilies for Mademoiselle Josephine while you are drowning the puppies; that is little odd jobs. May Satan twist her neck who invented them!"

"Very sad all this," said young Riviere, as gravely as he could; "but about the family."

"I *am* citizen. When I go into their kitchen to court Jacintha a bit, instead of finding a good supper there, which a man has a right to, courting a cook, if I don't take one in my pocket, there is no supper, not to say supper, for either her or me. I don't call a salad and a bit of cheese rind — supper! Beggars in silk and satin I call them. Every sou they have goes on to their backs, instead of into their bellies."

"Nonsense, Dard. I know your capacity, but you could not eat a hole in their income, that ancient family."

"I could eat it all, and sit here. Income! I would not change incomes with them if they'd throw me in a pancake a day. I tell you, citizen, they are the poorest family for leagues round; not that they need be quite so poor, if they could swallow a little of their pride. But no, they must have china, and plate, and fine linen, at dinner; so their fine plates are always bare, and their silver trays empty. Ask the butcher, if you don't believe *me!*

"You ask him whether he does not go three times to the smallest shopkeeper, for once he goes to Beaurepaire. Their tenants send them a little meal and eggs, and now and then a hen, because they must; their great garden is chock-full of fruit and vegetables, and Jacintha makes me dig in it gratis, — and so they muddle on. And then the baroness must have her coffee as in the days of old, and they can't afford to buy it, — so they roast, — haw! haw! — they roast a lot of horse beans that cost nothing, and grind them, and serve up the liquor in a silver *cafetière*, on a silver salver. *Aristo va.*"

"Is it possible? — reduced to this! — oh!"

"Perdition seize them! why don't they melt their silver into soup, — why don't they sell the superfluous and buy the grub? and I can't see why they don't let their house and that accursed garden, in which I sweat gratis, and live in a small house, and be content with as many servants as they can pay wages to."

"Dard," said Riviere, thoughtfully, interrupting him, "is it really true about the beans?"

"I tell you I have seen Mademoiselle Laure doing it for the old woman's breakfast; it was Laure invented the move. A girl of nineteen beginning already to deceive the world. But they are all tarred with the same stick. *Aristo va.*"

"Dard, you are a brute!"

"Me, citizen?"

"You! there is noble poverty, as well as noble wealth. I might have disdained these people in their prosperity, but I revere them in their affliction."

"I consent," replied Dard, very coolly. "That is your affair; but permit me," and here he clenched his teeth at remembrance of his wrongs, "on my own part to say that I will no more be a scullery-man without wages to these high-minded starvelings, these illustrious beggars." Then he heated himself red hot. "I will not even be their galley-slave. Next, I have done my last little odd job in this world," yelled the now infuriated *factotum*. "All is ended. Of two things one, — either Jacintha quits those *aristos*, or I leave Jacin— Eh? — ah! — oh! — ahem! How —'ow d'ye do, Jacintha?" and his roar ended in a whine, as when a dog runs barking out and receives in full career a cut from his master's whip, and his generous rage turns to whimper then and there. "I was just talking of you, Jacintha," faltered Dard, in conclusion.

"I heard you, Dard," replied Jacintha, slowly, quietly, grimly.

Dard from oval shrank back to round.

The person whose sudden appearance at the door of the porch reduced the swelling Dard to his natural limits, moral and corporeal, was a strapping young woman, with a comely, peasant face, somewhat freckled, and a pair of large black eyes, surmounted by coal-black brows that inclined to meet upon the bridge of the nose. She stood in a bold attitude, her massive but well-formed arms folded so that the pressure of each against the other made them seem gigantic, and her cheek pale with wrath, and her eyes glittering like basilisks' upon citizen Dard. Had petulance mingled with her wrath, Riviere would have howled with laughter at Dard's discomfiture, and its cause; but a handsome woman, boiling with suppressed ire, has a touch of the terrible, and Jacintha's black eyes and lowering black brows gave her, in this moment of lofty indignation, a grander look than belonged to her. So even Riviere put down his pipe, and gazed up in her face with a shade of misgiving.

She now slowly unclasped her arms, and, with her great eye immovably fixed on Dard, she pointed with a commanding gesture towards Beaurepaire. Citizen Dard was no longer master of his own limbs; he was even as a bird fascinated by a rattlesnake; he rose slowly, with his eyes fastened to hers, and was moving off like an ill-oiled automaton in the direction indicated; but at this a suppressed snigger began to shake Riviere's whole body till it bobbed up and down on the seat. That weakened the spell: Dard turned to him ruefully.

"There, citizen," he cried, "do you see that imperious gesture? Now I'll tell you what that means,—that means you promised to dig in the aristocrat's garden this afternoon,—so march! Here, then, is one that has gained nothing by kings being put down, for I am ruled with a rod of iron. Thank your stars, citizen, that you are not in my place."

"Dard," retorted Jacintha, "if you don't like your place, you can quit it. I know two or three that will be glad to take it. There, say no more; now I am here I will go back to the village, and we shall see whether all the lads recoil from a few little jobs to be done by my side, and paid by my friendship."

"No! no! Jacintha; don't be a fool! I am going; there, I am at your service, my dear friend. Come!"

"Go then; you know what to do."

"And leave you here?"

"Yes," said Jacintha. "I must speak a word to monsieur,—you have rendered it necessary."

The subjugated one crept to Beaurepaire, but often looked behind him. He did not relish leaving Jacintha with the handsome young citizen, especially after her hint that there were better men in the district than himself.

Jacintha turned to young Riviere, and spoke to him in a very different tone,—coldly, but politely.

"Monsieur will think me very hardy thus to address a stranger, but I ought not to allow monsieur to be deceived, and those I serve belied."

"There needs no excuse, female citizen. I am at your service; be seated."

"Many thanks, monsieur; but I will not sit down, for I am going immediately."

"All the worse, female citizen. But I say, it seems to me then you heard what Dard was saying to me. What, did you listen? O fie!"

"No, monsieur, I did not listen," replied Jacintha, haughtily. "I am incapable of it; there was no necessity. Dard bawled so loud the whole village might hear. I was passing, and heard a voice I knew raised so high, I feared he was drunk; I came therefore to the side of the porch—with the best intentions. Arrived there, words struck my ear that made me pause. I was so transfixed I could not move. Thus, quite in spite of myself, I suffered the pain of hearing his calumnies; you see, monsieur, that I did not play the spy on you; moreover, that character would nowise suit with my natural

disposition. I heard too your answer, which does you so much credit, and I instantly resolved that you should not be imposed upon."

"Thank you, female citizen."

"Neither the family I serve, nor myself, are reduced to what that little fool described. I ought not to laugh, I ought to be angry; but after all it was only Dard, and Dard is a notorious fool. There, monsieur," continued she, graciously, "I will be candid, I will tell you all. It is perfectly true that the baron contracted debts, and that the baroness, out of love for her children, is paying them off as fast as possible, that the estate may be clear before she dies. It is also true that these heavy debts cannot be paid off without great economy. But let us distinguish. Prudence is not poverty; rather, my young monsieur, it is the thorny road to wealth."

"That is neatly expressed, female citizen!"

"Would monsieur object to call me by my name, since that of citizen is odious to me and to most women?"

"Certainly not, Mademoiselle Jacintha, I shall even take a pleasure in it, since it will seem to imply that we are making a nearer acquaintance, mademoiselle."

"Not mademoiselle, any more than citizen. I am neither demoiselle, nor dame, but plain Jacintha."

"No! no! no! not plain Jacintha! Do you think I have no eyes then, pretty Jacintha?"

"Monsieur, a truce to compliments! Let us resume!"

"Be seated, then, pretty Jacintha!"

"It is useless, monsieur, since I am going immediately. I will be very candid with you. It is about Dard having no supper up at Beaurepaire. This is true. You see I am candid, and conceal nothing. I will even own to you that the baroness, my mistress, would be very angry if she knew supper was not provided for Dard; in a word, I am the culprit. And I am in the right. Listen. Dard is egoist. You may even, perhaps, have yourself observed this trait."

"Glimpses of it — ha! ha! ha! — he! ho!"

"Monsieur, he is egoist to that degree that he has not a friend in the world, but me. I forgive him, because I know the reason; he has never had a headache or a heartache in his life."

"I don't understand you, Jacintha."

"Monsieur, at your age there are many things a young man does not understand. But, though I make allowances for Dard, I know what is due to myself. Yes, he is so egoist, that, were I to fill that paunch of his, I should no longer know whether he came to Beaurepaire for me or for himself. Now Dard is no beauty, monsieur; figure to yourself that he is two inches shorter than I am."

"O Heaven! he looks a foot."

"He is no scholar neither, and I have had to wipe up many a sneer and many a sarcasm on his account; but up to now I have always been able to reply that this five feet two inches of egoism loves me disinterestedly; and the moment I doubt this point I give him his *congé*, — poor little fellow! Now you comprehend all, do you not? Confess that I am reasonable.

"*Parbleu!* I say, I did not think your sex had been so sagacious."

"You saw me on the brink of giving the poor little being his dismissal?"

"I saw and admired. Well, then, female cit— ah! pardon — Jacintha: so then the family at Beaurepaire are not in such straits as Dard pretends?"

"Monsieur, do I look like one starved?"

"By Jove, no! — by Ceres, I mean!"

"Are my young mistresses wan — and thin — and hollow-eyed?"

"Treason! — blasphemy! — ah! no. By Venus and Hebe no!"

Jacintha smiled at this enthusiastic denial, and also because her sex smile when words are used they do not understand, — guess why!

She resumed : —

"When a cup overflows it cannot be empty; those have enough who have to spare; now how many times has Dard himself sent or brought a weary soldier to our kitchen by Mademoiselle Laure's own orders?"

"Ah! I can believe it."

"And how many times have I brought a bottle of good Medoc for them from the baroness's cellar!"

"You did well. I see; Dard's egoism blinded him: they are prudent, but neither stingy nor poor. All the better. But stay! — the coffee — the beans."

Jacintha colored, and seemed put out, but it was only for a moment; she smiled good-humoredly enough, and put her hand in her pocket and drew out a packet.

"What is that?"

"Permit me; it is coffee, and excellent if I may judge by the perfume; you have just bought it in the village?"

Jacintha nodded.

"But the beans!"

"The beans! — the beans! Well — he! he! — Monsieur, we have a little merry angel in the house called Mademoiselle Laure. She set me one day to roast some beans, — the old doctor wanted them for some absurd experiment. Dard came in, and seeing something cooking, 'What are they for?' said he, 'what in Heaven's name are they for?' His curiosity knew no bounds. I was going to tell him, but Mademoiselle Laure gave me a look. 'To make the family coffee to be sure,' says she; and the fool believed it."

Riviere and Jacintha had a laugh over Dard's credulity.

"Well, Jacintha, thank Heaven! Dard is mistaken; and yet I am going to say a foolish thing; do you know I half regret they are not as poor, no not quite, but nearly as poor, as he described them; for then — "

"What then?"

"You need not be angry now."

"Me, monsieur? One is in no haste to be angry with such a face as yours, my young monsieur."

"Well, then, I should have liked them to be a little poor, that I might have had the pleasure and the honor of being useful to them."

"How could you be of use to them?"

"O, I don't know, — in many ways, — especially now I have made your acquaintance, — you would have told me what to do. I would not have disobeyed you, for you are a treasure, and I see you love them sincerely; it is a holy cause; it would have been, I mean; and we should have been united in it, Jacintha."

"Ah yes! as to that, yes."

"We would have concerted means to do them kindness secretly, — without hurting their pride. And then I am in authority, Jacintha."

"I know it, monsieur. Dard has told me."

"In great authority for one so young. They are Royalists, — my secret protection might have been of wonderful service to them, and I could have given it them without disloyalty to the state; for, after all, what has the Republic to dread from women?"

Through all this, which the young fellow delivered not flowingly, but in a series of little pants, each from his heart, Jacintha's great black eye dwelt on him calm but secretly inquisitive, and on her cheek a faint color came and went two or three times.

"These sentiments do you honor, my pretty monsieur" (dwelling tenderly on the pretty).

"And so do yours do you," cried the young man, warmly. "Let us be friends, us two, who, though of different parties, understand one another. And let me tell you Mademoiselle, the Aristocrat, that we Republicans have our virtues too."

"Henceforth I will believe this for your sake, my child."

"I am going to tell you one of them."

"Tell me."

"It is this, — we can recognize and

bow to virtue in whatever class we find it. I revere you, cit — ahem! — henceforth Jacintha is to me a word that stands for loyalty, fidelity, and unselfish affection. These are the soul of nobility, — titles are its varnish. Such spirits as you, I say, are the ornaments of both our sexes, of every rank, and of human nature. Therefore give me your pretty brown hand a moment, that I may pay you a homage I would not offer to a selfish, and by consequence a vulgar duchess."

Jacintha colored a little; but put out her hand with a smile, and with the grace that seems born with Frenchwomen of all classes.

Riviere held the smiling peasant's hand, and bowed his head and kissed it.

A little to his surprise, the moment he relaxed his hold of it, it began to close gently on his hand and hold it, and even press it a very little. He looked up, and saw a female phenomenon. The smile still lingered on her lip, but the large black eyes were troubled, and soon an enormous tear quietly rolled out of them and ran down her tanned cheek.

The boy looked wistfully in her face for an explanation.

She replied to his mute inquiry by smiling, and pressing his hand gently, in which act another tear welled quietly up, and rippled over, and ran with a slant into the channel of the first.

The inexperienced boy looked so sad at this, that she pressed his hand still more, and smiled still more kindly. Then Edouard sat, and began to watch with innocent curiosity the tears arrive thus, two a minute, without any trouble while the mouth smiled and the hand pressed his.

At last he said, in a sort of petting tone, — "Crying, Jacintha?"

"No, my friend, — not that I am aware of."

"Yes, you are, — good! here comes another."

"Am I, dear? — it is possible."

"I like it, — it is so pretty. I am afraid it is my fault. By the by, what is it for?"

"My friend, perhaps it is that you praised me too warmly, monsieur; these are the first words of sympathy that have ever been spoken to me in this village, above all, the first words of good-will to the family I love so."

"Yes! you do love them, and so do I."

"Thank you! thank you!"

"What witchcraft do they possess? They make me, you, and, I think, every honest heart, their friend."

"Ah, monsieur, do not be offended, but believe me it is no small thing to be an old family. There, you see, I do not weep; on the contrary, I discourse. My grandfather served a baron of Beaurepaire. My father was their gamekeeper, and fed to his last hour from the baron's plate; he was disabled by ague for many years before he died, was my poor father; my mother died in the house, and was buried in the sacred ground near the family chapel. Yes, her body is aside theirs in death, and so was her heart while she lived. They put an inscription on her tomb praising her fidelity and probity. Do you think these things do not sink into the heart of the poor? — praise on her tomb, and not a word on their own, but just the name, and when each was born and died, you know. Ah! the pride of the mean is dirt, but the pride of the noble is gold!

* "For, look you, among *parvenus* I should be a servant, and nothing more; in this proud family I am a humble friend; of course they are not always gossiping with me like vulgar masters and mistresses, — if they did, I should neither respect nor love them; but they all smile on me whenever I come into the room, even the baroness herself. I belong to them, and they belong to me, by ties

* The French peasant often thinks half a sentence, and utters the other half aloud, and so breaks air in the middle of a thought. Probably Jacintha's whole thought, if we had the means of knowing it, would have run like this: "Besides I have another reason. I could not be so comfortable myself elsewhere, — for, look you —

without number, by the years themselves, — reflect, monsieur, a century, — by the many kind words in many troubles, by the one roof that sheltered us a hundred years, and the grave where our bones lie together till the day of God."

Jacintha clasped her hands, and the black eyes shone out warm through their dew.

Riviere's glistened too.

"It is well said," he cried; "it is nobly said! But, permit me, these are ties that owe their force to the souls they bind. How often have such bonds round human hearts proved ropes of sand. They grapple *you* like hooks of steel, — because you are steel yourself to the backbone. I admire you, cit— Jacintha dear. Such women as you have a great mission in France just now."

"Is that true? What can women do?"

"BRING FORTH HEROES! Be the mothers of great men, — the Catos and the Gracchi of the future."

Jacintha smiled. She did not know the Gracchi and their political sentiments; and they sounded well. "Gracchi!" a name with a ring to it. People of distinction no doubt.

"That would be too much honor," replied she, modestly. "At present I must say adieu!" and she moved off an inch at a time, and with an uncertain hesitating manner, looking this way and that "out of the tail of her eye," as the Italians and Scotch phrase it.

Riviere put no interpretation on this.

"Adieu then, if it must be so," said he.

She caught sight of the game laid out: on this excuse she stopped dead short.

She eyed it wistfully.

Riviere caught this glance. "Have some of it," cried he, "do have some of it."

"What should I do with game?"

"I mean for the chateau."

"They have such quantities of it."

"Ah! no doubt. All the tenants send it, I suppose."

"Of course they do."

"What a pity! It is then fated that I am not to be able to show my good-will to that family, not even in such a trifle as this."

Jacintha wheeled suddenly round on him, and so by an instinct of female art caught off its guard that face which she had already openly perused.

This done, she paused a moment, and then came walking an inch at a time back to him; entered the porch thoughtfully, and coolly sat down. At first she sat just opposite Riviere, but the next moment, reflecting that she was in sight from the road, she slipped into a corner, and there anchored. Riviere opened his eyes, and while she was settling her skirts he was puzzling his little head.

"How odd," thought he. "So long as I asked her to sit down, it was always, 'No, I am going.'"

"Yes, my friend, you have divined it!"

"O, have I? — ah, yes — divined what?"

"That I am going to tell you the truth. Your face as well as your words is the cause; O yes, I will tell you all!"

"Is it about Beaurepaire?"

"Yes."

"But you did tell me all; those were your very words."

"It is possible; but all I told you was — inexact."

"O no, Jacintha, that cannot be. I felt truth in every tone of your voice."

"That was because you are true, and innocent, and pure. Forgive me for not reading you at a glance. Now I will tell you all."

"O do! pray do!"

"Listen then! ah, my friend, swear to me by that sainted woman, your mother, that you will never reveal what I trust you with at this moment!"

"Jacintha, I swear by my mother to keep your secret."

"Then, my poor friend, what Dard told you was not altogether false."

"Good Heavens! Jacintha."

"Though it was but a guess on his part; for I never trusted my own sweetheart as now I trust a stranger.

"You that have shown such good sentiments towards us, O, hear and then tell me, can nothing be done?

"No, don't speak to me, — let me go on before my courage dies; yes, share this secret with me, for it gnaws me, it chokes me.

"To see what I see every day, and do what I do, and have no one I dare breathe a word to; O, it is very hard.

"Nevertheless, see on what a thread things turn: if one had told me an hour ago it was you I should open my heart to!

"My child, my dear old mistress, and my sweet young ladies are — ah! no I can't! I can't!

"What a poltroon I am. Yes! thank you, your hand in mine gives me courage: I hope I am not doing ill. They are not economical. They are not stingy. They are not paying off their debts. My friend, the baroness and the demoiselles de Beaurepaire — are PAUPERS."

CHAPTER. III.

"PAUPERS?"

"Alas!"

"Members of the nobility paupers?"

"Yes; for their debts are greater than their means; they live by sufferance, — they lie at the mercy of the law, and of their creditors; and every now and then these monsters threaten us, though they know we struggle to give them their due."

"What do they threaten?"

"To petition government to sell the chateau and lands, and pay them, — the wretches!"

"The hogs!"

"And then, the worst of it is, the family can't do anything the least little bit mean. I was in the room when M. Perrin, the notary, gave the baroness a hint to cut down every tree on the estate, and sell the timber, and lay by the money for her own use. She heard him out, and then, O, the look she gave him, — it withered him up on his chair.

"'I rob my husband's and my Josephine's estate of its beauty! cut down the old trees that show the chateau is not a thing of yesterday, like your Directory, your Republic, and your guillotine!'

"So then, Monsieur Perrin, to soften her, said: 'No, madame, spare the ancient oak of course, and indeed all the very old trees; but sell the others.'

"'The others? what, the trees that my own husband planted? and why not knock down my little oratory in the park, — he built it. The stones would sell for something, — so would Josephine's hair and Laure's. You do not know, perhaps, each of those young ladies there can sit down upon her back hair. Monsieur, I will neither strip the glory from my daughters' heads, nor from the ancient lands of Beaurepaire, — nor hallow some Republican's barn, pigsty, or dwelling-house, with the stones of the sacred place where I pray for my husband's soul.'

"Those were her words. She had been sitting quite quiet like a cat, watching for him. She rose up to speak, and those words came from her like puffs of flame from a furnace. You could not forget one of them if you lived ever so long. He has n't come to see us since then, and it 's six months ago."

"I call it false pride, Jacintha."

"Do you? then I don't," said Jacintha, firing up.

"Well, no matter; tell me more."

"I will tell you all. I have promised."

"Is it true about the beans?"

"It is too true."

"But this coffee that you have just bought?"

"I have not bought it; I have embezzled it. Every now and then I take a bunch of grapes from the conservatory. I give it to the grocer's wife. Then she gives me a little coffee, and says to herself, 'That girl is a thief.'"

"More fool she. She says nothing of the sort, you spiteful girl."

"Then I secretly flavor my poor mistress's breakfast with it."

"Secretly? But you tell Mademoiselle Laure."

"How innocent you are! — Don't you see that she roasts beans that her mother may still think she drinks coffee; and that I flavor her rubbish on the sly, that Mademoiselle Laure may fancy her beans have really a twang of coffee; and, for aught I know, the baroness sees through us both, and smacks her lips over the draught to make us all happy; for women are very deep, my young monsieur,— you have no idea how deep they are. Yes, at Beaurepaire we all love and deceive one another."

"You make my heart sick. Then it was untrue about the wine?"

"No, it was not; we have plenty of that. The baron left the cellar brimful of wine. There is enough to last us all our lives; and, while we have it, we will give it to the brave and the poor."

"And pinch yourselves?"

"And pinch ourselves."

"Why don't they swap the wine for necessaries?"

"Because they could not do a mean thing."

"Where is the meanness? Am I the man to advise a mean thing?"

"Ah, no, monsieur. Well, then, they won't do a thing other barons of Beaurepaire never did; and that is why they sit down to a good bottle of wine from their own cellar, and to grapes and peaches from their own garden, and even truffles from their own beech coppice, and good cream from their own cow, and scarce two sous' worth of bread, and butcher's meat not once a fortnight."

"In short, they eat fifteen francs' worth of luxuries, and so have not ten sous for wholesome food."

"Yes, monsieur."

"Yes, monsieur?" cried Riviere, spitefully mocking her; "and don't you see this is not economy, but extravagance? Don't you see it is their duty as well as their interest to sell their wine, or some of it, and their fruit, and buy eatables, and even put by money to pay their debts?"

"It would be if they were vulgar people; but these are not grocers nor cheap Johns; these are the high *noblesse* of France."

"These are a pack of fools," roared the irritated Republican, "and you are as bad as they."

"I do not assert the contrary," replied Jacintha, humbly and lovingly, disarming his wrath with a turn of the tongue. "My friend," she continued in the same tone, "at present our cow is in full milk; so that is a great help; but when she goes dry, God knows what we shall do, for I don't." And Jacintha turned a face so full of sorrow on him, that he was ashamed of having been in a rage with her absurdity.

"And then to come by and hear my own sweetheart, that ought to be on my side, running down those saints and martyrs to a stran—, to our best friend."

"Poor Jacintha!"

"O no; don't, don't! already it costs me a great struggle not to give way."

"Indeed! you tremble."

"Like enough, — it is the nerves. Take no notice, or I could not answer for myself. My heart is like a lump of lead in my bosom at this hour. No! it is not so much for what goes on up at the chateau. That will not kill them. Love nourishes as well as food; and we all love one another at Beaurepaire. It is for the whisper I have just heard in the village."

"What? — what?"

"That one of these cruel creditors is going to have the estate and chateau sold."

"Curse him!"

"He might as well send for the guillotine and take their lives at once. You look at me. You don't know my mistress as I do. Ah! butchers, if it is so, you will take nothing out of that house but her corpse. And is it come to this? The great old family to be turned adrift like beggars to wander over the world? O, my poor mistress! O, my pretty demoiselles! that I played with and nursed ever since I was a child! — I was just six when Josephine was born, — and that I shall love till my last breath."

The young woman, torn by the violence of a feeling so long pent up in her own bosom, fell to panting, and laughing, and sobbing, and trembling violently.

The statesman, who had passed all his short life at school and college, was frightened out of his wits, and ran to her side, and took hold of her and pulled her, and cried, "O, don't, Jacintha; you will kill yourself, you will die! — this is frightful, — help here! help!"

Jacintha put her hand to his mouth, and, without leaving off her hysterics, gasped out, "Ah! don't expose me."

So then he did n't know what to do; but he seized a tumbler, and with trembling hand filled it with wine, and threw himself on his knees, and forced it between her lips. All she did was to bite a piece out of the glass as clean as if a diamond had cut it. This did her good, — destruction of sacred household property gave her another turn. "There, I've broke your glass now," she cried with a marvellous change of tone; and she came to, and sobbed and cried reasonably.

The other young thing of the tender, though impetuous heart, set to comfort her.

"Poor Jacintha! dear Jacintha! I will be a friend both to them and you. There is a kiss not to cry so." Oh, oh, oh! And lo, and behold! he burst out crying himself.

This gave Jacintha another turn.

"O my son! don't you cry! I will never s-s-suffer that."

"How can I help it? Oh! It is you make me, — sobbing and weeping like that."

"Forgive me, little heart. I will be m-more reasonable, not to afflict you. O, see, I leave off! Oh! I will take the wine."

Edouard put the other side of the glass to her lips, and she supped a teaspoonful of the wine. This was her native politeness, not to slight a remedy he had offered. Then he put down the glass, and she drew his head lightly to her bosom, and he felt her quietly crying. She was touched to the core by his sympathy. As for him, he was already ashamed of the weakness he could not quite master, and was not sorry to hide his face so agreeably.

"O dear! Now — oh! — you are not to fancy (I can hear your heart beat where I am, Jacintha) *I* ever cry. I have not done such a contemptible thing since I was a boy."

"I believe it. Forgive me. It was all my fault. It is no discredit. Ah! no, my son; those tears do you honor, and make the poor Jacintha your friend."

These foolish drops did not long quench our statesman's and puppy's manly ardor.

"Come, come!" he cried, "let us do something, not sit blubbering."

"Ah! if we could do anything," cried Jacintha, catching fire at him.

"Why, of course we can. People never know what they can do till they try. *I* shall think of something, you may depend." (Vanity revived.)

"And I must run to Beaurepaire; they will think I am lost."

"O Jacintha!"

"What?"

"You will take some of the game now."

"That I will — from you."

"Thank you. Quick — quick — for goodness' sake. Here, take these four birds. That is right; pin up

your apron, — that makes a capital pocket."

"The hare would be more nourishing than the birds," said Jacintha, timidly.

"You are to have the hare as well, of course; send me down Dard; he shall take her up."

"No! no! Dard and I are bad friends. I will ask no favor of him. He shall be my suppliant all this day, not I his. Look at my arm, do you think that is afraid of a hare?"

"Why, it is half as big again as mine, Jacintha; for all that, I shall carry the hare up in my pocket. France is still France, whatever you may think; a pretty woman must not be let drag a hare about the nation; come — "

"Surely, monsieur does not think of accompanying me!"

"Why not?"

"O, as for that, I am no prude, — it is a road, too, on which one meets no one, — ah bah! if you are not ashamed of me, I am not of you, — *allons.*"

They walked up the road in silence. Riviere had something on his mind, and Jacintha was demurely watching for it out of the tail of her eye. At last, ashamed of going along and not saying a word to rustic Hebe, he dropped out this in an absent sort of way: "I shall never know by your manner whether you are telling the truth or — the reverse." No answer.

"You do it beautifully." No answer.

"So smooth and convincing." No answer.

"Seriously, then, I used to think it a crime, a sordid vice, — but now I see that even a falsehood, coming from a pure heart, is purified, and becomes virtuous, pious."

"Never!"

"And useful."

"What use were mine? I had to unpick them the next minute, — and do you think I did not blush like fire while I was eating my own words one after another?"

"I did not see you."

"A sign I blushed inside, and that is worse. My young monsieur," continued Jacintha, gravely, "listen to me. A lie is always two things, — a lump of sin, and a piece of folly. Yes! women are readier and smoother at that sort of work than men, — all the worse for them. Men lie at times to gain some end they are hard bent on; but their instinct is to tell the truth, those that are men at all. But women, especially uneducated ones like me, run to a lie the first thing, like rats to a hole. Now, mark the consequence: women suffer many troubles, great and small; half of these come to them by the will of God; but the other half they make for themselves by their silly want of truth and candor — there!"

"Bless my soul! here is a sermon. Why, how earnest you are!"

"Yes, I am in earnest, and you should not mock me. Consider, I am many years older than you, — you are not twenty, I think, and I am close upon five-and-twenty, — and I have seen ten times as much life as you, though I have lived in a village."

"Don't be angry, Jacintha; I listen to every word."

"I am in earnest, my friend, because you terrified me when you smirked like that and talked of beautiful lies, pious lies, (why not clean filth?) and then quoted me to prove it. Innocence is so easily corrupted. And I could not sleep at night if my tongue had corrupted one so innocent and good and young as you, my dear."

"Now, don't you be alarmed," cried the statesboy, haughtily, "you need not fear that I shall ever take after women in that or anything else."

"Mind they will be the first to despise you if you do, — that is their way, — it is one of them that tells you so."

"Set your mind at ease, fair moralist; I shall think of your precepts. I will even note down one of the brilliant things you said"; and he took

out his tablets. "'A lie is a — lump of sin, and a bit — no — a piece of folly eh?'"

"That is it!" cried Jacintha, gayly, her anxiety removed.

"I did not think you were five-and-twenty, though."

"I am then, — don't you believe me?"

"Why not? Indeed how could I disbelieve you after your lecture?"

"It is well," said Jacintha, with dignity.

She was twenty-seven by the parish books.

Riviere relapsed into his revery.

This time it was Jacintha who spoke first.

"You forgive me for breaking the glass, monsieur, and making you cry?"

"Bother the glass, — what little things to think of; while I — and as for the other business — you did it fairly; you made a fool of me, but you began with yourself, — please to remember that."

"O, a woman cries as she spits, — that goes for nothing, — but it is not fair of her to make a man cry just because he has a feeling heart."

"Stop! — 'A woman — cries — as she spits!' Why, Jacintha, that is rather a coarse sentiment to come from you, who say such beautiful things, and such wise things — now and then."

"What would you have?" replied Jacintha, with sudden humility. "When all is done I am but a domestic; I am not an instructed person."

"On reflection, if coarse, it is succinct. I had better note it down with the other — no — I shall remember this one without."

"You may take your oath of that. Good things have to be engraved on the memory, — bad ones stick there of themselves. Monsieur, we are now near Beaurepaire."

"So I see. Well?"

"I don't come out every day, — if monsieur has anything important to say to me, now is surely the time."

"Ah! What do you mean?"

"I mean that all this chat is not what you want to say to me. There is something you have half a mind to tell Jacintha, and half a mind not. Do you think I can't read your face by this time? There, I stop to hear it before it is too late. Come, out with it."

"It is all very well to say out with it, but I have not the courage."

"It is then that you do not feel I am your friend."

"Don't speak so, and don't look so kindly, or I shall tell you. Jacintha — "

"My child."

"It is going to be secret for secret between us two, — is not that nice?"

"Delicious!"

"Ay; but you must swear as I did, for my secret is as important as yours, — every bit."

"I swear!"

"Then, Jacintha, I am in love!"

And, having made the confession blushing, he smiled a little pompously, for he felt it was a step that stamped him a man.

Jacintha's face expanded with sacred joy at the prospect of a love affair; then she laughed at his conceit in fancying a boy's love could be as grave a secret as hers; finally she lowered her voice to a whisper, though no creature was in sight.

"Who is it, dear?" and her eye twinkled, and her ear cocked, and all the woman bristled.

"Jacintha, can't you guess?" and he looked down.

"Me? How should I know which way your fancy lies?"

But even as she said these words her eye seemed to give a flash inwards, and her vivid intelligence seized the clew in a moment.

"I was blind!" she screamed, "I was blind! It's my young lady. I thought it was very odd you should cry for me, and take such an interest, — ah! rogue with the face of innocence. But how and where was it

done? They never dine from home. You have not been two months here, — that is what put me off the very idea of such a thing. The saints forgive us, he has fallen in love with her in church!"

"No, no. Why, I have met her eleven times out walking with her sister, stupid, and twice she smiled on me. O Jacintha! a smile such as angels smile, — a smile to warm the heart and purify the soul and last forever in the mind."

"Well, I have heard say that 'man is fire and woman tow,' but this beats all. Ha! ha!"

"O, do not jest! I did not laugh at you."

"I will not be so cruel, so ungrateful, as to jest. Still, — he! he!"

"No, Jacintha, it is no laughing matter; I revere her as mortals revere the saints. I love her so, that, were I ever to lose all hope of her, I would not live a day. And now that you have told me she is poor and in sorrow, and I think of her walking so calm and gentle, — always in black, Jacintha, — and her low courtesy to me whenever we met, and her sweet smile to me though her heart must be sad, oh! my heart yearns for her. What can I do for her? How shall I surround her with myself unseen, — make her feel that a man's love waits upon her feet every step she takes, — that a man's love floats in the air round that lovely head. And O Jacintha! if some day she should deign to ask, 'Who is this, whom as yet I know only by his devotion?'"

"She will ask that question much earlier than you seem to think, Innocence."

"Will she? bless you, Jacintha; but it is ungenerous to think of the reward for loving. O no, I will entertain no selfish motives, I will love and prove my love whether there is any hope for me or not; dear Jacintha, *is* there any hope for me, do you think?"

Now Jacintha could not help fearing there was very little, but her heart and his earnest face looking into hers would not let her say so.

"There is hope for all men," said she. "I will do all I can for you, and tell you all I see; but after all it must depend on yourself; only I may hinder you from going at it in a hurry and spilling the milk forever. After all," she continued, looking at the case more hopefully, "the way to win such ladies as mine is to deserve them, — not one in fifty men deserves such as they are, but you do. There is not a woman in the world that is too good for you."

"Ah, Jacintha, that is nonsense. I deeply feel my inferiority."

"And if you were, you would n't," cried the sententious maid, one of whose secret maxims appears to have been "point before grammar."

"Jacintha, before I go, remember, if anything happens you have a friend out of the house."

"And you a stanch friend in it."

"Jacintha, I am too happy; I feel to want to be alone with all the thoughts that throng on me. Good by, Jacintha"; and he was off like a rocket.

"My hare! my hare! my hare!" screeched Jacintha, on the ascending scale.

"O you dear girl! you remember all the *little* things; my head is in a whirl, — come out, hare."

"No!" said Jacintha. "You take her round by the back wall and fling her over."

Jacintha gave this order in a new tone, — it was pleasant; but there was a little air of authority now that seemed to say: "I have got your secret; you are in my power, you must obey me now, my son; or —"

Riviere did as ordered, and when he came back Jacintha was already within the grounds of Beaurepaire. She turned and put a finger to her lips, to imply dead secrecy on both sides; he did the same, and so the vile conspirators parted.

Puppies, like prisoners and a dozen other classes, are of many classes

stupidly confounded under one name by those cuckoos that chatter and scribble us dead, but never think. There is the commonplace young puppy, who is only a puppy because he is young. The fate of this is to outgrow his puppydom, and be an average man, — sometimes wise, sometimes silly, and on the whole neither good nor bad. Sir John Guise was a puppy of this sort in his youthful day. I am sure of it. He ended a harmless biped: witness his epitaph: —

HERE LIES
Sir John Guise.
No one laughs;
No one cries.
Where he is gone,
And how he fares,
No one knows,
And no one cares.

There is the vacant puppy, empty of everything but egoism, and its skin full to bursting of that. Eye, the color of which looks washed out; much nose, — little forehead, — long ears.

Young lady, has this sort of thing been asking you to share its home and gizzard? On receipt of these presents say "No," and ten years after go on your bended knees and bless me! Men laugh at and kick this animal by turns; but it is woman's executioner. Old age will do nothing for this but turn it from a selfish whelp to a surly old dog. Unless Religion steps in, whose daily work is miracles.

There is the good-hearted, intelligent puppy. Ah! poor soul, he runs tremendous risks.

Any day he is liable to turn a hero, a wit, a saint, an useful man.

Half the heroes that have fallen nobly fighting for their country in this war and the last, or have come back scarred, maimed, and glorious, were puppies; smoking, drawling, dancing from town to town, and spurring the ladies' dresses.

They changed with circumstances, and without difficulty.

Our good-hearted, intelligent puppy went from this interview with a servant-girl — a man.

He took to his bosom a great and tender feeling that never yet failed to ennoble and enlarge the heart and double the understanding.

She he loved was sad, was poor, was menaced by many ills; then she needed a champion. He would be her unseen friend, her guardian angel. A hundred wild schemes whirled in his beating heart and brain, as he went home on wings. He could not go in-doors. He made for a green lane he knew at the back of the village, and there he walked up and down for hours. The sun set, and the night came, and the stars glittered; but still he walked alone, inspired, exalted, full of generous and loving schemes, and sweet and tender fancies: a heart on fire; and youth the fuel, and the flame vestal.

CHAPTER IV.

This day, so eventful to our ex-puppy's heart, was a sad one up at Beaurepaire.

It was the anniversary of the baron's death.

The baroness kept her room all the morning, and took no nourishment but one cup of spurious coffee Laure brought her. At one o'clock she came down stairs. She did not enter the sitting-room. In the hall she found two chaplets of flowers; they were always placed there for her on this sad day. She took them in her hand, and went into the park. Her daughters watched her from the window. She went to the little oratory that was in the park; there she found two wax candles burning, and two fresh chaplets hung up. Her daughters had been there before her.

She knelt and prayed many hours for her husband's soul; then she rose and hung up one chaplet and came slowly away with the other in her hand.

At the gate of the park filial love met her as Josephine, and filial love as Laure watched the meeting from the window.

Josephine came towards her with tender anxiety in her sapphire eyes, and wreathed her arms round her, and whispered half inquiringly, half reproachfully : —

"You have your children still."

The baroness kissed her and replied with a half-guilty manner : —

"No, Josephine, I did not pray to leave you, — till you are happy."

"We are not unhappy while we have our mother," replied Josephine, all love and no logic.

They came towards the house together, the baroness leaning gently on her daughter's elbow.

Between the park and the angle of the chateau was a small plot of turf called at Beaurepaire the Pleasance, a name that had descended along with other traditions ; and in the centre of this Pleasance or Pleasaunce stood a wonderful oak-tree. Its circumference was thirty-four feet.

The baroness came to this ancient tree, her chaplet in her hand.

The tree had a mutilated limb that pointed towards the house. The baroness hung her chaplet on this stump.

The sun was setting tranquil and red ; a broad ruby streak lingered on the deep green leaves of the prodigious oak.

The baroness looked at it awhile in silence.

Then she spoke slowly to the oak, and said, —

"You were here before us, — you will be here when we are gone."

A spasm crossed Josephine's face, but she said nothing.

They went in together.

We will follow them. But first, ere the sun is set, stay a few minutes and look at the Beaurepaire oak, while I tell you the little men knew about it, not the thousandth part of what it could have told if trees could speak as well as breathe.

The baroness did not exaggerate. The tree was somewhat older than even this ancient family. There was a chain of family documents, several of which related incidents in which this tree played a part.

The oldest of these manuscripts was written by a monk, a younger son of the house, about five hundred years before our story. This would not have helped us much, but luckily the good monk was at the pains to collect all the oral traditions about it that had come down from a far more remote antiquity, and, like a sensible man, arrested and solidified them by the pen. He had a superstitious reverence for the tree ; and probably this too came down to him from his ancestors, as it was certainly transmitted by him to the chroniclers that succeeded him.

The sum of all is this.

The first Baron of Beaurepaire had pitched his tent under a fair oak-tree that stood *prope rivum*, — near a brook. He afterwards built a square tower hard by, and dug a moat that enclosed both tree and tower and received the waters of the brook aforesaid. These particulars corresponded too exactly with the present face of things and the intermediate accounts, to leave a doubt that this was the same tree.

In these early days its size seems to have been nothing remarkable, and this proves it was still growing timber. But a century and a half before the monk wrote it had become famous in all the district for its girth, and in the monk's own day had ceased to grow, but showed no sign of decay. The mutilated arm I have mentioned was once a long sturdy bough worn smooth as velvet in one part from a curious cause : it ran about as high above the ground as a full-sized horse, and the knights and squires used to be forever vaulting upon it, the former in armor ; the monk when a boy had seen them do it a thousand times.

The heart of the tree began to go,

and then this heavy bough creaked suspiciously. In those days they did not prop a sacred bough with a line of iron posts as now. They solved the difficulty by cutting this one off within six feet of the trunk; two centuries later, the tree being now nearly hollow, a rude iron bracket was roughly nailed into the stem, and running out three feet supported the knights' bough; for so the mutilated limb was still called.

What had not this tree seen since first it came green and tender as a cabbage above the soil, and stood at the mercy of the first hare or rabbit that should choose to cut short forever its frail existence!

Since then eagles had perched on its crown and wild boars fed without fear of man upon its acorns. Troubadours had sung beneath it to lords and ladies seated around or walking on the grass and commenting the minstrels' tales of love by exchange of amorous glances.

It had seen a Norman duke conquer England, and English kings invade France and be crowned at Paris. It had seen a woman put knights to the rout, and seen God insulted and the warrior virgin burned by envious priests, with the consent of the curs she had defended and the curs she had defeated.

Mediæval sculptors had taken its leaves, and wisely trusting to Nature had adorned many a church with those leaves cut in stone.

Why, in its old age it had seen the rise of printing, and the first dawn of national civilization in Europe. It flourished and decayed in France; but it grew in Gaul. And more remarkable still, though by all accounts it is like to see the world to an end, it was a tree in ancient history: its old age awaits the millennium: its first youth belonged to that great tract of time which includes the birth of Christ, the building of Rome, and the siege of Troy.

The tree had mingled in the fortunes of the family.

It had saved their lives and taken their lives. One Lord of Beaurepaire, hotly pursued by his feudal enemies, made for the tree, and hid himself partly by a great bough, partly by the thick screen of leaves. The foe darted in, made sure he had taken to the house, ransacked it, and got into the cellar where by good luck was store of Malvoisie; and so the oak and the vine saved the quaking baron.

Another Lord of Beaurepaire, besieged in his castle, was shot dead on the ramparts by a cross-bowman who had secreted himself unobserved in this tree a little before the dawn.

A young heir of Beaurepaire, climbing for a raven's nest to the top of this tree, whose crown was much loftier then than now, lost his footing and fell, and died at the foot of the tree; and his mother in her anguish bade them cut down the tree that had killed her boy. But the baron, her husband, refused, and said what in the English of the day would run thus: "ytte ys eneugh that I lose mine sonne, I will nat alsoe lose mine Tre." In the male the solid sentiment of the proprietor outweighed the temporary irritation of the parent. Then the mother, we are told, bought fifteen ells of black velvet, and stretched a pall from the knights' bough across the west side to another branch, and cursed the hand that should remove it, and she herself "wolde never passe the Tre neither going nor coming, but went still about."

And when she died and should have been carried past the tree to the park, her dochter did cry from a window to the bearers, "Goe about! goe about!" and they went about: and all the company. And in time the velvet pall rotted, and was torn and driven away *rapidis ludibria ventis:* and when the hand of Nature, and no human hand, had thus flouted and dispersed the trappings of the mother's grief, two pieces were picked up and preserved among the family relics; and the black velvet had turned a rusty red.

So the baroness did nothing new in

this family when she hung her chaplet on the knights' bough; and, in fact, on the west side, about eighteen feet from the ground, there still mouldered one corner of an atchievement an heir of Beaurepaire had nailed there two centuries before, when his predecessor died: "for," said he, "the chateau is of yesterday, but the tree has seen us all come and go." The inside of the tree was clean gone: it was hollow as a drum, — not eight inches thick in any part; and on its east side yawned a fissure as high as a man and as broad as a street door. Dard used to wheel his wheelbarrow into the tree at a trot, and there leave it.

In spite of excavation and mutilation, not life only but vigor dwelt in this wooden shell, — the extreme ends of the longer boughs were firewood, touchwood, and the crown was gone time out of mind: but narrow the circle a very little to where the indomitable trunk could still shoot sap from its cruise deep in earth, in there on every side burst the green leaves in summer countless as the sand. The leaves carved centuries ago from these very models, though cut in stone, were most of them mouldered, blunted, notched, deformed, — but the delicate types came back with every summer perfect and lovely as when the tree was but their elder brother, — and greener than ever: for from what cause Nature only knows, the leaves were many shades deeper and richer than any other tree could show for a hundred miles round, — a deep green, fiery, yet soft; and then their multitude, — the staircases of foliage as you looked up the tree, and could scarce catch a glimpse of the sky, — an inverted abyss of color, a mound, a dome, of flake emeralds that quivered in the golden air.

And now the sun sets — the green leaves are black — the moon rises — her cold light shoots across one half that giant stem.

How solemn and calm stands the great round tower of living wood, half ebony, half silver, with its mighty cloud above of flake jet leaves tinged with frosty fire at one edge!

Now is the still hour to repeat in a whisper the words of the dame of Beaurepaire: "You were here before us: you will be here when we are gone."

Let us leave the hoary king of trees standing in the moonlight, calmly defying time, and let us follow the creatures of a day; since what they were we are.

A spacious saloon panelled: dead but snowy white picked out sparingly with gold. Festoons of fruit and flowers finely carved in wood on some of the panels. These also not smothered with gilding, but, as it were, gold-speckled here and there, like tongues of flame winding among insoluble snow.

Ranged against the walls were sofas and chairs covered with rich stuffs well worn. And in one little distant corner of the long room a gray-haired gentleman and two young ladies sitting on cane chairs round a small plain table, on which burned a solitary candle; and a little way apart in this candle's twilight an old lady sat in an easy-chair, in a deep revery, thinking of the past, scarce daring to inquire the future.

Josephine and Laure were working, not fancy work but needle-work; Doctor St. Aubin, writing.

Every now and then he put the one candle nearer the girls. They raised no objection, only a few minutes after a white hand would glide from one or other of them like a serpent, and smoothly convey the light nearer to the doctor's manuscript.

"Is it not supper-time?" inquired the doctor, at last.

"One would think not. Jacintha is very punctual."

"So she may be, but I have an inward monitor, mesdemoiselles; and, by the way, our dinner was, I think, more ethereal than usual."

"Hush!" said Josephine, and

looked uneasily towards her mother. She added in a whisper: "Wax is so dear."

"Wax? — ah! — pardon me," and the doctor returned hastily to his work.

Then Laure looked up and said: "I wonder Jacintha does not come, — it is certainly past the hour"; and she pried into the room as if she expected to see Jacintha on the road. But she saw in fact very little of anything, for the spacious room was impenetrable to her eye. Midway from the candle to the distant door its twilight deepened, and all became shapeless and sombre.

The prospect ended half-way sharp and black, as in those out-o'-door closets imagined and painted by Mr. Turner, whose Nature (Mr. Turner's) comes to a full stop as soon as Mr. Turner sees no further occasion for her, instead of melting by fine expanse and exquisite gradation into genuine distance as Nature does in Claude and and in Nature. To reverse the picture, standing at the door you looked across forty feet of black, and the little corner seemed on fire, and the fair heads about the candle shone like the heads of St. Cecilias and Madonnas in an antique stained-glass window.

At last Laure observed the door open, and another candle glowed upon Jacintha's comely peasant face in the doorway. She put down her candle outside the door, and started as the crow flies for the other light.

After glowing a moment in the doorway she dived into the shadow and emerged into light again close to the table, with napkins on her arm. She removed the work-box reverentially, the doctor's manuscript unceremoniously, and proceeded to lay a cloth, in which operation she looked at Josephine a point-blank glance of admiration; then she placed the napkins; and in this process she again cast a strange look of interest upon Josephine.

The young lady noticed it this time, and looked inquiringly at her in return, half expecting some communication; but Jacintha lowered her eyes and bustled about the table. Then Josephine spoke to her with a sort of instinct of curiosity, — that this look might find words.

"Supper is a little late to-night; is it not, Jacintha?"

"Yes, mademoiselle, I have had more to do than usual"; and with this she delivered another point-blank look as before, and dived into the palpable obscure and came to light in the doorway.

Josephine. "Did you see that?"

Laure. "What?"

Josephine. "The look she gave me?"

Laure. "No. What look?"

Josephine. "A singular look, a look of curi—osity, — one would almost say of admi— but no; that is impossible —"

St. Aubin (dryly). "Clearly." He added after a pause: "yet after all it is the prettiest face in the room —"

"Doctor," cried Laure, with fury.

"My child, I did not see you."

"And how dare you call my Josephine pretty? the Madonna pretty? does that describe her? I am indignant."

St. Aubin. "Mademoiselle Laure, permit me to observe that, by calling Mademoiselle *your* Josephine, you claim a monopoly that — ahem! — cannot possibly be conceded."

Laure (haughtily). "Why, whose Josephine is she but mine?"

St. Aubin (after coolly taking a pinch of snuff, and seeming to reflect). "Mine."

Here a voice at the fireplace put quietly in: "Twenty years ago Laure was not born, and my good friend there had never see Beaurepaire. Whose Josephine was she then, good people?"

"Mamma! whose is she now?" and Josephine was at her mother's knees in a moment.

"Good!" said the doctor to Laure. "See the result of our injudicious competition. A third party has carried

her off. Is supper never coming? Are you not hungry, my child?"

"Yes, my friend — no! not very."

Alas! if the truth must be told, they were all hungry. So rigorous was the economy in this decayed but honorable house, that the wax candles burned to-day in the oratory had scrimped their dinner, unsubstantial as it was wont to be. Think of that, you in fustian jackets who grumble on a full belly. My lads, many a back you envy, with its silk and broadcloth, has to rob the stomach.

"Ah! here she is."

The door opened; Jacintha appeared in the light of her candle a moment with a tray in both hands; and approaching was lost to view.

Before she emerged to sight again a strange and fragrant smell heralded her. All their eyes turned with curiosity towards the unwonted odor, till Jacintha dawned with three roast partridges on a dish.

They were wonder-struck. Jacintha's face was red as fire, partly with cooking, partly with secret pride and happiness: but she concealed it, and indeed all appearance of feeling, under a feigned apathy. She avoided their eyes, and resolutely excluded from her face everything that could imply she did not serve up partridges to this family every night of her life.

The young ladies looked from the birds to her, and from her to the birds, in mute surprise, that was not diminished by the cynical indifference printed on her face.

"The supper is served, Madame the Baroness," said she, with a respectful courtesy and a mechanical tone, and, plunging into the night, swam out at her own candle, shut the door, and, unlocking her face that moment, burst out radiant, and went down beaming with exultation; and had an agreeable cry by the kitchen fire, the result of her factitious and somewhat superfluous stoicism up stairs; and, the tear still in her eye, set to and polished all the copper stew-pans with a vigor and expedition unknown to the new-fangled domestic.

"Partridges, mamma!" cried Laure. "What next?"

"Pheasants, I hope," cried the doctor, gayly. "And after them hares; to conclude with royal venison. Permit me, ladies." And he set himself to carve with zeal.

Now nature is nature, and two pair of violet eyes brightened and dwelt on the fragrant and delicate food with demure desire.

For all that, when St. Aubin offered Josephine a wing, she declined it.

"No partridge?" cried the *savant*, in utter amazement.

"Not to-day, dear friend, — it is not a feast day to-day."

"Ah! no; what was I thinking of?" said the poor doctor.

"But you are not to be deprived," put in Josephine, anxiously. "We will not deny ourselves the pleasure of seeing you eat some."

"What?" remonstrated St. Aubin, "am I not one of you?"

The baroness had attended to every word of this. She rose from her chair, and said quietly: "Both you and he and Laure will be so good as to let me see you eat them."

"But, mamma," remonstrated Josephine and Laure, in one breath.

"*Je le veux*," * was the cold reply.

These were words the baroness uttered so seldom that they were little likely to be disputed.

The doctor carved and helped the young ladies and himself.

When they had all eaten a little, a discussion was observed to be going on between Laure and her sister. At last St. Aubin caught these words: —

"It will be in vain, even you have not influence enough for that, Laure."

"We shall see," was the reply, and Laure put the wing of a partridge on a plate, and rose calmly from her chair. She took the plate and put it on the little work-table by her mother's side.

* It is my will.

The others pretended to be all mouths, but they were all ears.

The baroness looked in Laure's face with an air of wonder that was not very encouraging. Then, as Laure said nothing, she raised her aristocratic hand with a courteous but decided gesture of refusal.

Undaunted little Laure laid her palm softly on the baroness's shoulder, and said to her as firmly as the baroness herself had just spoken: —

"*Il le veut, ma mère!*" *

The baroness was staggered. Then she looked steadily in silence at the fair young face, — then she reflected. At last she said with an exquisite mixture of politeness and affection: —

"It is his daughter who has told me '*Il le veut!*' I obey."

Laure, returning like a victorious knight from the lists, saucily exultant, and with only one wet eyelash, was solemnly kissed and petted by the other two.

Thus they loved one another in this great old falling house. Their familiarity had no coarse side. A form, not of custom but affection, it walked hand in hand with courtesy by day and night; *aristo ra!*

The baroness retired early to rest this evening.

She was no sooner gone than an earnest and anxious conversation took place between the sisters. It was commenced in a low tone, not to interrupt St. Aubin's learned lucubrations.

Josephine. "Has she heard anything?"

Laure. "About our harsh creditor, — about the threatened sale of Beaurepaire? Not that I know of. Heaven forbid!"

Josephine. "Laure, she said some words to me to-day that make me very uneasy, but I did not make her any answer. She said (we were by the great oak-tree), 'You were here before us, — you will be here after us.'"

* It is his will, my mother.

"O heaven, who has told her? Can Jacintha have been so mad?"

"That faithful creature. O no! When she told me her great anxiety was lest my mother should know."

"May Heaven bless her for having so much sense as well as fidelity. The baroness must never know this till the danger is past, — poor thing! the daily fear would shake her terribly."

Josephine. "You have heard what we have been saying?"

St. Aubin. "Every word. Let me put away this rubbish, in which my head but not my heart is interested, and let us unite heart and hand against this new calamity. Who has threatened to sell Beaurepaire?"

Josephine. "A single creditor. But Jacintha could not tell me his name."

St. Aubin. "That will be easily discovered. Now as for those words of the baroness, do not be disquieted. You have put a forced interpretation on them, my dear."

Josephine. "Have I, doctor?"

St. Aubin. "The baroness is an old lady, conscious of her failing powers."

Josephine. "O doctor. I hope not."

St. Aubin. "She stood opposite an ancient tree. Something of this sort passed through her mind: 'You too are old, older than I am, but you will survive me.'"

Laure. "But she said 'us,' not 'me.'"

St. Aubin. "O, 'us' or 'me.' Ladies are not very exact."

Josephine. "What you say is very intelligent, my friend; but somehow that was not what she meant."

"It is the simplest interpretation of her words."

"I confess it."

"Can you give me any tangible reason for avoiding the obvious interpretation?"

"No. Only when you are so well acquainted with the face and voice of any one as I am with dear mamma's,

you can seize shades of meaning that are not to be conveyed to another by a bare account of the words spoken."

"This is fanciful: chimerical."

"I feel it may appear so."

Laure. "Not to me, I beg to observe: it is quite simple, perfectly notorious, and as clear as day."

St. Aubin. "To you, possibly, enthusiastic maid; but I have an unfortunate habit of demanding a tangible reason for my assent to any given proposition."

Laure. "It is an unfortunate habit. Josephine dear, tell me now what was the exact feeling that our mother gave you by the way she said those words."

"Yes, dear. Well, then," — here Josephine slightly knitted her smooth brow, and said slowly, turning her eyes inwards, — "our mother did not intend to compare the duration of our mortal lives with that of a tree."

"*Petitio principii*," said the doctor, quietly.

"*Plait il?* On the other hand, if she had heard our impending misfortune, would she not have been less general? would she not have spoken to me, and not to the tree? I think then that our dear mother had a general misgiving, a presentiment that we shall be driven from this beloved spot; and this presentiment found words at the sight of that old companion of our fortunes; but, even if this be the right interpretation, I cannot see her come so near the actual truth without trembling; for I know her penetration; and O, if it were even to reach her ears that — alas! my dear mother."

"It never shall, my little angel, it never shall; to leave Beaurepaire would kill the baroness."

"No, doctor, do not say so."

Laure. "Let us fight against our troubles, but not exaggerate them. Mamma would still have her daughters' love."

"It is idle to deceive ourselves," replied St. Aubin. "The baroness would not live a month away from Beaurepaire. At her age men and women hang to life by their habits. Take her away from her chateau, from the little oratory where she prays every day for the departed, from her place in the sun on the south terrace, and from all the memories that surround her here, she would bow her head and die."

Here the *savant*, seeing a hobby-horse near, caught him and jumped on.

He launched into a treatise upon the vitality of human beings, wonderfully learned, sagacious, and misplaced. He proved at length that it is the mind which keeps the body of man alive for so great a length of time as fourscore years. He informed them that he had in the earlier part of his studies carefully dissected a multitude of animals, — frogs, rabbits, dogs, men, horses, sheep, squirrels, foxes, cats, &c., — and discovered no peculiarity in man's organs to account for his singular longevity, except in the brain or organ of mind. Thence he went to the longevity of men with contented minds, and the rapid decay of the careworn. He even explained to these girls why no bachelor had ever attained the full age of man, which he was obliging enough to put at one hundred and ten years. A wife, he explained, is essential to vast longevity; she is the receptacle of half a man's cares, and of two thirds of his ill-humor.

After many such singular windings very proper to a lecture-room, he came back to the baroness; on which his heart regained the lost ascendency over his head, and he ended a tolerably frigid discourse in a deep sigh.

"O doctor," cried Laure, "what shall we do?"

"I have already made up my mind. I shall have an interview with Perrin, the notary."

"But we have offended him."

"Not mortally. Besides, the baroness was in the wrong."

"Mamma in the wrong?"

"Excusably, but unquestionably.

She was impetuous out of place. Maitre Perrin gave her the advice, not of a delicate mind, but of a friend who had her interest at heart. He is under great obligations to this family. He can now repay them without injury to himself; this is a flight of gratitude of which I believe even a notary capable. Are you not of my opinion, mademoiselle?"

Josephine's reply was rather feminine than point-blank.

"I have already been so unfortunate as to differ once with my best friend"; and she lowered her lashes and awaited her doom.

"This dear poltroon," cried Laure, — "speak!"

"Well, then, my friend, Monsieur Perrin does not inspire me with confidence."

"Humph! have you heard anything against him?"

"No; it is only what I have observed; let us hope I am wrong. Well, then, Laure, the man's face carries one expression when he is on his guard and another when he is not. His voice too is not frank. It is not a genuine part of himself as yours is, dear doctor, — and then it is not — it is not one."

"*Diable!* has he two voices?"

"Yes! and perhaps more. When he is in this room his voice is — is — what shall I say? Artificial honey?"

"Say treacle," put in Laure.

"You have said it, Laure; that is the very word I was searching for; but out of doors I have heard him speak very differently, in a voice imperious, irascible, I had almost said brutal. Ay, and the worst is that bad voice was his own voice."

"How do you know that?"

"I don't know how I know it, dear friend. Something tells me."

"However, you can give a tangible reason, of course," said the doctor, treacherously.

"No, my friend; I am not strong at reasons. Consider, I have not the advantage of being a *savant*. I am but a woman. My opinion of this man is an instinct, not a reason."

The doctor's face was provoking.

Josephine saw it, but she was one not easily provoked. She only smiled a little sadly. Laure fired up for her.

"I would rather trust an instinct of Josephine's than all the reasons of all the *savans* in France!"

"Laure!" remonstrated Josephine, opening her eyes.

"Reasons? — straws!" cried Laure, disdainfully.

"Hallo!" cried St. Aubin, with a comical look.

"And there are always as many of these straws against the truth as for it. The Jansenists have books brimful of reasons. The Jesuits have books full against them. The Calvinists and all the heretics have volumes of reasons — *so* thick. Is it reason that teaches me to pray to the Madonna and the saints! and so — Josephine is right and you are wrong."

"Well jumped. Alas! I am intimidated, but not convinced."

"Your mistake is replying to her, doctor," said Josephine; "that encourages her, — a little virago that rules us all with iron. Come here, child, and be well kissed for your effrontery; and now hold your tongue. Tell us your plan, doctor, and you may count on Laure's co-operation as well as mine. It is I who tell you so."

"She is right again, doctor," said Laure, peeping at him over her sister's shoulder.

St. Aubin, thus encouraged, explained to them that he would, without compromising the baroness, write to Monsieur Perrin, and invite him to an interview. The result is certain. This harsh creditor will be paid off by a transfer of the loan, and all will be well. Meantime there is nothing to despond about; it is not as if several creditors were agreed to force a sale. This is but one, and the most insignificant of them all."

"Is it? I hope it may be. What makes you think so?"

"I know it, Josephine."

The girls looked at one another.

"O, you have no rival to fear in me. My instincts are so feeble that I am driven for aid to that contemptible ally, Reason. Thus it is. Our large creditors are men of property, and such men let their funds lie unless compelled to move them. But the small mortgagee, the needy man, who has, perhaps, no investment to watch but one small loan, about which he is as anxious and as noisy as a hen with one chicken, — he is the clamorous creditor, the harsh little egoist, who at the first possibility of losing a crown piece would bring the Garden of Eden to the hammer. Go then to rest, my children, and sleep calmly. Heaven watches over you, and this gray head leaves its chimeras when your happiness is in peril."

"And there is no better head," said Laure, affectionately, — but she must add saucily, — "when it does come out of the clouds"; and with this sauce in her very mouth she inclined her white forehead to Monsieur St. Aubin for his parting salute.*

He wrote an answer immediately.

* The sparring between St. Aubin and Laure de Beaurepaire was not exactly what it looks on paper at first glance. But we soon come to the limit of the fine arts. The art of writing, to wit, tells you what people said, but not how; yet "how" makes often all the difference. When these two fenced in talk, the tones and the manner were full of affection and playfulness, and robbed of their barb words, which, coarsely or unkindly uttered, might have stung. Look at those two distant cats fighting. They roll over one another in turn; they bite with visible fury, they scratch alternate. Tigers or theologians could do no more. In about two minutes a black head, a leaf torn out of Dr. Watts, and a tabby tail, will strew the field, sole relics of this desperate encounter. Now go nearer; you shall find that in these fierce bites the teeth are somehow kept back entirely, and the scratching is tickling done with a velvet paw, not the poisoned iron claw. The fighting resolves itself into two elements, play and affection. These combatants are never strange cats, or cats that bear each other a grudge. And this mock fighting is a favorite gambol with many animals; with none more so than with men and women, especially intelligent and finely tempered ones. Be careful not to do it with a fool. I don't tell you why, because the fool will show you.

The young ladies retired to rest, greatly reassured and comforted by their friend's confidence, and he with a sudden change of manner paced the apartment nervously till one in the morning. His brow was knitted, and his face sad, and if his confidence had been real, why, then much of it oozed away as soon as he had no one to comfort or confute.

At one o'clock in the morning he sat down and wrote to the notary.

His letter, the result of much reflection, was tolerably adroit.

He deplored the baroness's susceptibility, hinted delicately that she had in all probability already regretted it, and more broadly that he had thought her in the wrong from the first. If Monsieur Perrin shared in any degree his regret at the estrangement, there was now an opportunity for him to return with credit to his place as friend of the family. And, to conclude, the writer sought a personal interview.

Let us follow this letter. It was laid on the notary's table the next afternoon.

As he read it, a single word escaped his lips, "Curious!"

He wrote an answer immediately.

St. Aubin was charmed with his reply, and its promptness. He drew the girls aside, and read them the note. They listened acutely.

"*Monsieur Perrin had never taken serious offence at the baroness's impetuosity, for which so many excuses were to be made. It was in pressing, indiscreetly, perhaps, her interest, that he had been so unfortunate as to give her pain. He now hoped Monsieur St. Aubin would show him some way of furthering those interests without annoying her. He would call either on the doctor or on the baroness at any hour that should be named.*"

"There," cried St. Aubin, "is not that the letter of a friend, and an honest man, or, at all events, an honest notary?"

"O yes! but is it not *too* pure?" suggested Josephine. "Such an entire abnegation of self, — is that natural, — in a notary, too, as you observe?"

"Childishness! this is a polite note, as well as a friendly one, — politeness always speaks a language the opposite of egoism, and consequently of sincerity, — it is permitted even to a notary to be polite."

"That is true: may I examine it?"

Josephine scanned it as if she would extract the hidden soul of each particular syllable. She returned it with a half-sigh. "I wish it had a voice and eyes, then I could perhaps — But let us hope for the best."

"I mean to," cried the doctor, cheerfully. "The man will be here himself in forty-eight hours. I shall tell him to be sure and bring his voice and his eyes with him; to these he will add of his own accord that little pony round as a tub he goes about on, — another inseparable feature of the man."

So the manly doctor kept up their young spirits and beguiled their anxious hearts of a smile.

"Curious!" said the notary.

An enigmatical remark; but I almost think I catch the meaning of it: it must surely have had some reference to the following little scene that passed just five days before the notary received the doctor's letter.

Outside a small farm-house, two miles from Beaurepaire, stood a squab pony, dun-colored, with a white mane and tail. He was hooked by the bridle to a spiral piece of iron driven into the house to hang visitors' nags from by the bridle.

The farmer was a man generally disliked and feared, for he was one of those who can fawn or bully as suits their turn; just now, however, he was in competent hands. The owner of the squab dun was talking to him in his own kitchen as superiors are apt to speak to inferiors, and as superior very seldom speaks to anybody.

The farmer, for his part, was waiting his time to fire a volley of oaths at his visitor, and kick him out of the house. Meantime, cunning first, he was watching to find out what could be the notary's game.

"So you talk of selling up my friend the baroness?" said Perrin, haughtily.

"Well, notary," replied the other, coolly, "my half-year's interest has not been paid; it is due this two months."

"Have you taken any steps?"

"Not yet; but I am going to the mayor this afternoon, if you have no objection" (this with a marked sneer).

"You had better break your leg, and stay at home."

"Why so? if you please."

"Because, if you do, you are a ruined man."

"I 'll risk that. Haw! haw! Your friends will have to grin and bear it, as we used them under the kings. They have no one to take their part against me that I know of, without it is you; and you are not the man to pay other folks' debts, I should say."

"They have a friend who will destroy you if you are so base as to sell Beaurepaire for your miserable six thousand francs."

"Who is the man? if it is not asking too much."

"You will know all in good time. Let us speak of something else. You owe twelve thousand francs to François, your cousin."

Bonard changed color.

"How do you know that? He promised faithful not to tell a soul."

"When he promised, he did not know you intended to get drunk and call his wife an unpolite name."

"I never got drunk, and I never called the jade an ugly name."

"You lie, my man."

"Well, monsieur, suppose I did; hard words break no bones; he need not talk, — *he* thrashes her, the pig."

"She says *not*. But that is not the point; there are women who like to be thrashed; but there is not one who likes to be called titles reflecting on her discretion. So Madame Brocard has given you a lesson not to injure the weak, — especially the weak that are strong, — women, to wit. This

one was strong enough to make François sell your debt to an honest man, who is ready to receive payment at this hour."

"Is it a jest? How can I pay twelve thousand francs all in a moment? Let him give me proper time, and it is not twelve thousand francs that will trouble Jacques Bonard, you know that, monsieur."

"I know that to pay it you must sell your ricks, your horses, your chairs and tables, and the bed you sleep on."

"Yes, I can! yes, I can! especially if I have your good word, monsieur; and I know you will — Ten to one if my new creditor (curse him!) is not known to you."

"He is."

"There then it is all right. Every man in the department respects you. I 'll be bound you can turn him round your finger, whoever he is."

"I can."

"There is a weight off my stomach. Well, monsieur, now first of all who is the man, — if it is not asking too much?"

"It is I."

"You?"

"I!"

"Ugh!"

"Well, sir, what is to be done?"

"Can you pay me?"

"That I can; but you must give me time."

"If you will give me security, not else."

"And I will. What security will you have?"

The notary answered this question by action. He put his hand in his pocket and drew out a parchment.

The farmer's eye dilated.

"This is a bond by which you give me a hold upon your Beaurepaire loan."

"Not an assignment?" gasped Bonard.

"Not an assignment. On the contrary, a bond that prevents your either assigning or selling your loan, or forcing Beaurepaire to a sale, — penalty, twenty thousand francs in either case."

The farmer groaned.

"Call a witness, and sign."

Bonard went to the window, opened it, and called to a man in the farmyard: "Here, Georges, step this way."

As he turned round from the window the first thing he saw was the notary pulling another document out of his other pocket. Paper this time instead of parchment.

The farmer's eye dilated.

"Not another!! saints of Paradise, not another!!!" he yelled.

"This is to settle the interest, — nothing more."

"What interest? Ours? Why, the interest is settled, — it is three per cent."

"Was! but I am not so soft as to lend my money at three per cent. — Are you? You bleed the baroness six per cent."

"What has that to do with it? I take what I can get. But I can't *pay* six per cent."

"You are not required. I am not an usurer. I lend at five per cent what little I lend at all, and I 'll trouble you for your signature."

"No! no!" cried the farmer, standing at bay, "you can't do that. Three per cent is the terms of the loan. Hang it, man, stand to your own bargain!"

The notary started up like Jack in the box, with startling suddenness and energy.

"Pay me my twelve thousand francs!" cried he, fiercely, or I empty your barns and gut your house before you can turn round. You can't sell Beaurepaire in less than a month, but I 'll sell you up in forty-eight hours."

"Sit ye down, sir! for Heaven's sake sit ye down, my good monsieur, and don't talk like that, — don't quarrel with an honest man for a thoughtless word. Ah! here is Georges. Step in, Georges, and see me sign my soul and entrails away at a sitting — ugh!"

Five minutes more, the harsh creditor, the parish bully, was obsequiously holding the notary's off stirrup. He mounted the squab dun and cantered off with the parchment sword and the paper javelin in the same pocket now, — and tacked together by a pin.

CHAPTER V.

Eight days after the above scene, three days after the notary received St. Aubin's letter and said, "Curious," came an autumn day, refreshing to late turnips, but chilling and depressing to human hearts, and death to those of artists. A steady, even, down pour of rain, with gusts of wind that sent showers of leaves whirling from the orange-colored trees.

Black doubled-banked clouds promised twenty-four hours' moist misery; and as for the sun, hang me if you could guess on which side of the house he was, except by looking first at a clock, then at an almanac.

Even the sorrows and cares of the decaying house of Beaurepaire grew darker and heavier this day. Even Laure, the gayest, brightest, and most hopeful of the party, sat at the window, her face against the pane, and felt lead at her young heart.

While she sat thus, sad and hopeless, instinctively reading the future lot of those she loved in those double-banked clouds, her eye was suddenly attracted by a singular phenomenon. A man of gigantic height and size glided along the public road, one half his huge form visible above the high palings.

He turned in at the great gate of Beaurepaire, and lo the giant was but a rider with a veiled steed. Clear of the palings, he proved to be an enormous horseman's cloak, — a pyramid of brown cloth with a hat on its apex, and a pony's nose protruding at one base, tail at the other. Rider's face did not show, being at the top of the cone but inside it.

At the sight of this pageant Laure could hardly suppress a scream of joy.

Knight returning from Crusades was never more welcome than this triangle of broadcloth was to her.

She beckoned secretly to St. Aubin. He came, and at the sight went hastily down and ordered a huge wood fire in the dining-room, now little used. He then met the notary at the hall door, and courteously invited him in.

"But stay! — your pony, — what shall we do with him?"

"Give yourself no trouble on his account, monsieur; he will not stir from the door; he is Fidelity in person."

St. Aubin apologized for not taking his visitor up to the baroness; "But the business is one that must be kept from her knowledge." At this moment the door opened, and Josephine glided in. St. Aubin had not expected her, but he used her skilfully; "But here," said he, "is Mademoiselle de Beaurepaire come to bid you welcome to a house from which you have been too long absent. Mademoiselle, now that you have welcomed our truant friend, be so good as to describe to him the report which I only know from you."

Josephine briefly told what she had heard from Jacintha, that there was one cruel creditor who threatened to sell the chateau and lands of Beaurepaire.

"Mademoiselle," said the notary, gravely, "that report is true. He openly bragged of his intention more than a week ago."

"Ah! we live so secluded, — you hear everything before us. Well, Monsieur Perrin, time was you took an interest in the fortunes of this family — "

"Never more than at the present moment, monsieur"; in saying this he looked at Josephine.

"The more to your credit, monsieur."

"Do you happen to know what is the sum due to this creditor?"

"I do. Six thousand francs."

St. Aubin looked at Josephine triumphantly.

"One of the very smallest creditors then."

"The smallest of them all," replied the notary.

Another triumphant glance from St. Aubin.

"For all that," said Monsieur Perrin, thoughtfully, "I wish it had been a larger creditor, and a less unmanageable man. The other creditors could be influenced by reason, by clemency, by good feeling, but this is a man of iron; humph, — may I advise?"

"It will be received as a favor."

"Then, — pay this man off at once, — have nothing more to do with him."

His hearers opened their eyes.

"Where are we to find six thousand francs?"

The notary reflected. "I have not at this moment six thousand francs, but I could contribute two thousand of the six."

"We thank you sincerely, but — "

"There then; I must contrive three thousand."

St. Aubin shook his head: "We cannot find three thousand francs."

"Then we must try and prevail on Bonard to move no further for a time; and in the interval we must find another lender, and transfer the loan."

"Ah! my good Monsieur Perrin, can you do this for us?"

"I can try; and you know zeal goes a good way in business. I will be frank with you; the character of this creditor gives me some uneasiness; but courage! all these fellows have secret histories, secret wishes, secret interests, that we notaries can penetrate, — when we have a sufficient motive to penetrate such rubbish, — but as it is not a matter to be trifled with, forgive me if I bid you and mademoiselle an unceremonious adieu."

He rose with zeal depicted on his face.

"Such a day for you to be out on our service," cried Josephine, putting up both her hands the palms outward, as if disclaiming the weather.

"If it rained, hailed, and snowed, I should not feel them in your cause, mademoiselle," cried the chivalrous notary; and he took by surprise one of Josephine's white hands, and kissed it with the deepest respect; then made off all in a bustle.

St. Aubin followed him to the door, and lo! "Fidelity in person" was gone.

St. Aubin was concerned.

The notary was a little surprised, but he gave a shrill whistle, and awaited the result; another, and this time a long tail came slowly out of the Beaurepaire oak; the pony's quarters followed; but, when his withers were just clear, the cold rain and wind struck on his loins, and the quadruped's bones went slowly in again. The tail had the grace to stay out; but hair is a vegetable, and vegetables like rain. The notary strode to the tree, and went in and backed "demifidelity in person" out. The pyramid of cloth remounted him, and away they toddled; Laure, in spite of her anxiety, giggling against the window; for why, the foreshortened animal's fore-legs being hidden by the ample folds, the little cream-colored hind legs seemed the notary's own.

Meantime St. Aubin was in earnest talk with Josephine in the hall.

"Well, that looks like sincerity!"

"Yes! you did not see the signal I made you."

"No! what signal? why?"

"His eye was upon you like a hawk's when he proposed to you to pay three thousand francs out of the six thousand. Ah, doctor, he was fathoming our resources. I wanted you not to lay bare the extent of our poverty and helplessness. O that eye! He only said it to draw you out."

"If you thought so, why did you not stop me?"

"I did all I could to. I made you a sign twice."

"Not that I observed."

"Ah! if it had been Laure, she would have understood it directly."

"But, Josephine, be candid: what sinister motive can this poor man have?"

"Indeed I don't know. Forgive me my uncharitable instinct, and let us admire your reasonable sagacity. It *was* our smallest creditor! Laure shall ask your pardon on her knees; dear friend, she will not leave our mother alone: be so kind as to go into the saloon; then Laure will come out to me."

The doctor did as he was bid; and sure enough, her mother having now a companion, Laure whipped out and ran post-haste to her sister for the news.

Thus a secret entered the house of Beaurepaire; a secret from which one person, the mistress of the house, was excluded.

This was no vulgar secrecy, — no disloyal, nor selfish, nor even doubtful motive mingled with it.

Circumstances appeared to dictate this course to tender and vigilant affection.

They saw and obeyed. They put up the shutters, not to keep out the light from some action that would not bear the light, but to keep the wind of passing trouble from visiting the aged cheek they loved and revered and guarded.

In three days the notary called again. The poor soul seemed a little downcast. He had been to Bonard and made no impression on him; and to tell the truth had been insulted by him, or next door to it.

On this they were all greatly dispirited.

Maitre Perrin recovered first. He brightened up all in a moment.

"I have an idea," said he; "we shall succeed yet; ay, and perhaps put *all* the liabilities on a more moderate scale of interest; meantime —" and here he hesitated. "I wish you would let an old friend be your banker and advance you any small sums you may need for present comforts or conveniences."

Laure's eyes thanked him; but Josephine, a little to her surprise, put in a hasty and firm, though polite negative.

The notary apologized for his officiousness, and said: —

"I do not press this trifling offer of service; but pray consider it a permanent offer which at any time you can honor me by accepting."

He addressed this to Josephine with the air of a subject offering one little acorn back out of all "the woods and forests" to his sovereign.

While the open friend of Beaurepaire was thus exhibiting his zeal, its clandestine friend was making a chilling discovery youth and romance have to make on their road to old age and caution, namely, how much easier it is to form many plans than to carry out one.

This boiling young heart had been going to do wonders for her he adored, and for those who were a part of her. He had been going to interest the government in their misfortunes, — but how? O, "some way or other." Looked at closer "some way" had proved impracticable, and "the other" unprecedented, i. e. impossible.

He had not been a mere dreamer in her cause, either. He had examined the whole estate of Beaurepaire, and had scientifically surveyed, on one government pretence or another, two or three of the farms. He had discovered to his great joy that all the farms were underlet; that there were no leases; so that an able and zealous agent could in a few months increase the baroness's income thirty per cent. But when he had got this valuable intelligence, what the better were they or he? To show them that they were not so poor as they in their aristocratical incapacity for business thought themselves, he must first win their ear: and how could he do this? If he were to call at Beaurepaire,

word would come down again, "not at home to strangers until the Bourbons come back." If he wrote, the answer would be: "Monsieur, I understand absolutely nothing of business. Be kind enough to make your communication to our man of business," — who must be either incapable or dishonest, argued young Riviere, or their affairs would not be thus vilely neglected; ten to one he receives a secret commission from the farmers to keep the rents low: so no good could come of applying to him, — and here stepped in a little bit of self, — for there are no angels upon earth except in a bad novel, and the poor boy was not writing a bad novel, but acting his little part in the real world.

"No!" said he, "*I* have found this out: perhaps she will never love me, but at least I will have her thanks, and the pride and glory of having done her and them a great service: no undeserving person shall rob me of this, nor even share it with me."

And here came the heart-breaking thing. The prospect of a formal acquaintance receded instead of advancing.

In the first place, his own heart interposed a fresh obstacle: the deeper he fell in love the more his assurance dwindled; and, since he found out they were so very poor, he was more timid still, and they seemed to him more sacred and inaccessible, for he felt in his own soul how proud and distant he should be if he was a pauper.

The next calamity was, the young ladies never came out now. Strange to say, he had no sooner confided his love and his hopes to Jacintha, than she he loved kept the house with cruel pertinacity. "Had Jacintha been so mad as to go and prattle in spite of her promise? had the young lady's delicacy been alarmed? was she imprisoning herself to avoid meeting one whose admiration annoyed her?"

A cold perspiration broke over him, whenever his perplexed mind came round to this thought.

Now the poor cannot afford to lose what the rich can fling away.

The sight of that sweet face for a moment thrice a week was not much, — ah! but it was, for it was all, — his one bit of joy and comfort and sunshine and hope, — and it was gone now. The loss of it kept him at fever heat every day of his life for an hour or two before their usual time of coming out and an hour or two after it, and chill at heart the rest of the day: and he lost his color and his appetite, and fretted and pined for this one look three times a week. And she who could have healed this wound with a glance of her violet eye and a smile once or twice a week, she who without committing herself or caring a straw for him could have brought the color back to this young cheek and the warmth to this chilled heart by just shining out of doors now and then instead of in, sat at home with unparalleled barbarity and perseverance.

At last one day he lost all patience. I must see Jacintha, said he, and, if she really imprisons herself to avoid me, I will leave the country, — I will go into the army, — it is very hard she should be robbed of her health and her walk because I love her; and with this generous resolution the poor little fellow felt something rise in his throat and nearly choke him, till a tear came to his relief. Forgive him, ladies: though a statesman, he was but a boy, —boys will cry after women as children for toys. You may have observed this!

He walked hurriedly up to Beaurepaire, asking himself how he should contrive an interview with Jacintha.

On his arrival there, casting his eyes over the palings, what did he see but the two young ladies walking in the park at a considerable distance from the house.

His heart gave a leap at the sight of them.

Then he had a sudden inspiration. The park was not strictly private, at

least since the Revolution. Still it was so far private that respectable people did not make a practice of crossing it.

I will seem to meet them unexpectedly, thought young Riviere, and, if she smiles, I will apologize for crossing the park; then I shall have spoken to her. I shall have broken the ice.

He met them. They looked so loftily sad he had not the courage to address them. He bowed respectfully, they courtesied, and he passed on cursing his cowardice.

I *must* see Jacintha. He made a long detour; his object being to get where he could be seen from the kitchen.

Meantime the following short dialogue passed between the sisters: —

Laure. "Why, he has lost his color! What a pity!"

Josephine. "Who, dear?"

Laure. "That young gentleman who passed us just now. Did you not observe how pale he has turned. He has been ill. I am so sorry."

Josephine. "Who is he?"

Laure. "I don't know who he is; I know what he is, though."

Josephine. "And what is he?"

Laure. "He is very handsome; and he passes us oftener than seems to me quite natural; and now I think of it," said Laure, opening her eyes ludicrously, "I have a sister who is a beautiful woman; and now I think of it again,"— opening her eyes still wider, — "if I do not lock her up, I shall perhaps have a rival in her affections."

Josephine. "Child! Moreover he seemed to me a mere boy."

Laure gave a toss of her head, and a suspicious look at Josephine.

"O mademoiselle, there are forward boys as well as backward ones. But I shall have an eye on you both."

Josephine smiled very faintly; amidst so many cares she was hardly equal to what she took for granted was a pure jest of Laure's, and their conversation returned to its usual channels.

Edouard got round to the other side of the chateau, and strolled about outside the palings some thirty yards from the kitchen door; and there he walked slowly about, hoping every moment to see the kitchen door open and Jacintha come out. He was disappointed; and, after hanging about nearly an hour, was going away in despair, when a window at the top of the house suddenly opened, and Jacintha made him a rapid signal with her hand to go nearer the public road. He obeyed; and then she kept him waiting till his second stock of patience was nearly exhausted; but at last he heard a rustle, and there was her comely face set between two young acacias. He ran to her. She received him with a rebuke.

"Is that the way to do? — prowling in sight, like a housebreaker."

"Did any one see me?"

"Yes! Mademoiselle Laure did; and, what is more, she spoke to me, and asked me who you were. Of course I said I did n't know."

"Oh! did you?"

"Then she asked me if it was not the young monsieur who sent them the game. Oh! I forgot, I ought to have told you that first. When they asked me about the game, I said, 'It is a young sportsman that takes Dard out; so he shot some on the baroness's land.' I was obliged to say that, you know."

"Well, but you spoke the truth."

"You don't mean that! — that is odd; but accidents will happen. 'And so he gave some of it to Dard for the house,' said I. But the next time you want me, don't stand sentinel for all the world to see; make me a signal and then slip in here, and I will join you."

"A signal?"

Jacintha put her hand under her apron and pulled out a dish-clout.

"Hang this on that tree out there; then I shall see it from the kitchen window; so then I shall know something is up. Apropos, what is up now?"

"I am very unhappy! — that is up."

"Oh! you must expect the cold fit as well as the hot fit, if you will fall in love," observed Jacintha, with a cool smile. "Why did n't you come to me before, and be cheered up. What is the matter?"

"Dear Jacintha, she never comes out now. What is to become of me if I am to lose the very sight of her? Surely, you have not been so indiscreet as to tell them — "

"There is a question. Do you see green in my eye, young man?"

"Then what is the reason? — there must be some reason. They used to walk out; pray, pray, tell me the reason."

Jacintha's merry countenance fell. "My poor lad," said she, kindly, "don't torment yourself, or fancy I have been such an ill friend to you, or such a novice, as to put them on their guard against you. No; it is the old story, — want of money."

"That keeps them in-doors? How can that be?"

"Well, now," said Jacintha, "it is just as well you have come to-day, for if you had come this time yesterday I could not have told you, but I overheard them yesternight. My son, it is for want of clothes."

Riviere groaned, and looked aghast at her.

"Don't!" cried the faithful servant, — "don't look at me so, or I shall give way, I know I shall; nor don't mistake me either,—they have plenty of colored dresses; old ones, but very good ones; but it is their black dresses that are worn shabby; and they can't afford to buy new; and all the old dresses are colored, and it goes against their hearts to go flaunting it. They were crying last night to think they could not afford even to mourn for their father, but must come out in colors, for want of a little money."

"Jacintha, they will break my heart."

"So it seems they have settled not to go out of the grounds at all. Thus they meet nobody; so now they can wear their mourning till it is quite threadbare. Ah, my son, how different from most women, that can't forget the dead too quick, and come flaring out again. And to-morrow is her birthday. I mind the time there was one beautiful new gown sure to be laid out on her bed that day, if not two. Times are sadly changed with us, monsieur."

"To-morrow is her birthday?"

"Yes!"

"Good by, Jacintha, — my heart is full. There! good by, loyal heart," and he kissed her hastily, with trembling lips.

"Poor boy! — don't lose my clout, whatever you do!"

She uttered this caution with extreme anxiety, and at the top of her voice, as he was running off in a strange flutter.

The next day the notary bustled in with a cheerful air. He had not a moment to stay, but just dropped in to say that he thought matters were going well, and that he should be able to muzzle Bonard.

After this short interview, which was with the young ladies only, for the doctor was out, away bustled Perrin.

It was about an hour after this, — Josephine was reading to the baroness, and Laura and she were working, — when in came Jacintha, and made a courtesy.

"The tree is come, my ladies."

"What tree?" inquired the baroness.

"For mademoiselle to plant, according to custom. It is her birthday. Dard has brought it; it is an acacia this time."

"The faithful creature," cried the baroness. "She has thought of this, — and we forgot it. There, bring me my shawl and hood. I will not be absent from the ceremony."

"But, dear mamma," put in Josephine, "had not you better look at us from the window, there is such a cold air out to-day?"

"It is not cold enough to chill a mother's love. My first-born!" cried the old lady, with a burst of nature; "I see her in her cradle now. Sweet little cherub."

In a few minutes they were all out in the garden.

Josephine was to decide where she would plant her tree.

"Only remember, mademoiselle," said Jacintha, "it will not always be little like it is now. You must not put it where it will be choked up when it is a big tree."

"O no, Jacintha," cried Laure, "we will plant it to the best advantage."

Then one advised Josephine to plant it on the south terrace; another preferred the turf oval between the great gate and the north side of the chateau. When they had said their say, to their surprise Josephine said rather timidly, "I should like to plant it in the Pleasance."

"In the Pleasance! Why, Josephine?"

"It will take some time to plant," explained Josephine.

"But it will take no more time to plant it where it will show than in the Pleasance," cried Laure, half angrily.

"But, Laure, the Pleasance is sheltered from the wind," said Josephine.

Dard gave a snort of contempt.

"It is sheltered to-day because the chateau happens to be between the wind and it. But the wind will not be always in that quarter; and the Pleasance is open to more winds than any other part, if you go to that."

"Dear mamma, may I not plant it in the Pleasance?"

"Of course you may, my child."

"And who told you to put in your word!" cried Jacintha to Dard. "You are to take up your spade and dig the hole where mademoiselle bids, — that is what you are here for, not to argufy."

"Laure, I admire the energy of that girl's character," remarked Josephine, languidly, as they all made for the Pleasance.

"Where will you have it?" asked Dard, roughly.

"Here, I think, Dard," said Josephine, sweetly.

Dard grinned malignantly, and drove in his spade. "It will never be much bigger than a stinging-nettle," thought he, "for the roots of the oak have sucked every atom of heart out of this." His black soul exulted secretly.

They watched his work.

"You are not cold, mamma?" asked Josephine, anxiously.

"No! no!" said the baroness. "There is no wind on this side of the house. Ah! now I see, my Josephine. I have a very good daughter, — who will never shine in horticulture."

Jacintha stood by Dard, inspecting his work; the three ladies stood together watching him at the distance of a few feet; on their right, but a little behind them, was the great oak. Close behind them was a lemon-tree and its mould in an immense tub; the tub was rotting at the sides. Over the mould was a little moss here and there.

Now, at the beginning of this business, the excitement of the discussion, and choosing the spot, and setting Dard to work, had animated the baroness as well as her daughter. But now, for some time Dard had all the excitement to himself. They had only to look on and think while he wrought.

"O dear," cried Laure, suddenly, "mamma is crying. Josephine, our mother is crying!"

"Ah!" cried Josephine, "I feared this. I did not want her to come out. O my mother! my mother!"

"My children," sobbed the baroness, "it is very natural. I cannot but remember how often we have planted a tree and kept the poor child's birthday — not as now. Those were on earth then that have left us and gone to God. Many friends stood around us, — how warm their hands,

how friendly their voices, how truthful their eyes! Yet they have abandoned us. Adversity has shaken them off as the frost is even now stripping off your leaves, old friend. These tears are not for me! O no! thanks to God and the Virgin I know whither I am going, and whom I shall meet again, I care not how soon; but it is to think I must leave my darlings behind me without a friend, my tender lambs in a world of foxes and wolves without a friend!"

"My mother, we have friends! We have the dear doctor."

"A *savdnt*, Laure, a creature more a woman than a woman; you will have to take care of him, not he of you."

"We have our own love! did ever a sister love another as I love Josephine?"

"No!" said Josephine. "Yes! I love you as much."

"As to that, yes, you will fall in one another's arms," said the baroness. "Ah! I do ill to weep this day; my children, suffer me to compose myself." And the baroness turned round, and applied her handkerchief to her eyes. Her daughters withdrew a step or two in the opposite direction; for in those days parents, even the most affectionate, maintained a marked superiority, and the above was a hint their mother would be alone a moment.

They waited respectfully for her orders to rejoin her. The order did come, and in a tone that surprised them.

"My children, come here, — both of you."

They found the baroness poking among the moss with the point of her ebony crutch.

"This is a purse, and it is not yours, Laure, nor yours, is it?"

The two girls looked, and, sure enough, there lay among the green moss in the tub a green silk purse. They eyed it like startled deer a moment, and then Laure pounced on it and took it up.

"O how heavy!" she cried. Jacintha and Dard came running up; Laure poured the contents into her hand, ten gold pieces of twenty francs each: new shining gold pieces. Jacintha gave a scream of joy, a sort of victorious war-whoop.

"Luck is turned," cried she, with joyful superstition. Laure stood with the gold pieces glittering in her pink white palm, and her face blushing all over and beaming, and her eyes glittering with excitement and pleasure. Their amazement was great.

"And here is a paper," cried Josephine, eagerly, bending over the moss and taking up a small piece of paper folded; she opened it rapidly, and showed it them all; it contained these words, in a copperplate hand: —

"*From a friend, — in part payment of a great debt.*"

And now all of a sudden Josephine began to blush; and gradually not only her face but her neck blushed all over, and even her white forehead glowed like a rose.

"Who could it be?" that was the question that echoed on all sides.

The baroness solved it for them: "It is St. Aubin."

"O mamma! he has not ten gold pieces."

"Who knows? he has perhaps found some bookseller who has bought his work on insects."

"No, mamma," said Laure; "I cannot think this is our dear doctor's doing. It is odd, too, his being out of the way at this hour: I never knew him anywhere but at his books till two. Hush! hush! — here he comes; let us circumvent him on the spot: this is fun."

"Give me the purse," said the baroness, "and you, Jacintha and Dard, recommence your work."

When the Doctor came up, he found Dard at work, Jacintha standing by him, and the ladies entirely occupied in looking on. The baroness explained to him what was going on. He showed considerable interest in it.

Presently the baroness put her hand in her pocket, and gave her daughters a look; four eyes were instantly levelled at the doctor's face. Stand firm, doctor; if there is a crevice in your coat of mail, those eyes will pierce it.

"By the by," said the baroness, with perfect nonchalance, "you have dropped your purse here; we have just picked it up"; and she handed it him.

"Thank you, madame," said he, and he took it carelessly; "this is not mine, — it is too heavy, — and, now I think of it," continued the *savant*, with enviable simplicity, "I have not carried a purse this twenty years. No! I put my silver in my right waistcoat-pocket, and my gold in my left, that is, I should, but I never have any."

"Doctor, on your honor, did you not leave this purse and this paper there?"

The doctor examined the paper. Meantime Laure explained to him what had occurred.

"Madame the baroness," said he, "I have been your friend and pensioner nearly twenty years; if by some strange chance money were to come into my hands, I should not play you a childish trick like this of which you seem to suspect me. I have the right to come to you and say, 'My old friend, here I bring you back a small part of all I owe you.'"

"My friend! my friend! I was stupid; tell us then who is our secret friend? may Heaven bless him!"

"Let us reflect," said the doctor. "Ah! to be sure. I would lay my life it is he!"

"Who?"

"A very honest man, whom you have treated harshly, madame; it is Perrin, the notary!"

It was the baroness's turn to be surprised.

"I may as well confess to you, madame, that I have lately had more than one interview with Perrin, and that, although he is naturally hurt at the severity with which you treated him, his regard for you is undiminished."

"I am as grateful as possible," said the baroness, with a fine and scarcely perceptible sneer.

"Laure," said Josephine, "it is curious, but Monsieur Perrin was here for a minute or two to-day; and really he did not seem to have anything particular to say."

"There!" shouted the doctor, — "there! he came to leave the purse. And in doing so he was only carrying out an intention he had already declared."

"Indeed!" said the baroness.

"He offered to advance money in small sums; an offer that of course was declined. So he was driven to this manœuvre. There are honest hearts among the notaries."

While the doctor was enforcing his views on the baroness, Josephine and Laure slipped away round the house.

"Who is it?" said Laure.

"It is not the doctor; and it is not Perrin, — of course not. But who is it?"

"Laure, don't you think it is some one who has at all events delicate sentiments?"

"Clearly, and therefore not a notary."

"Laure, dear, might it not be some person who has done us some wrong, and is perhaps penitent?"

"Certainly," said Laure. "Such a person might make restitution, — one of our tenants, or creditors, you mean, I suppose; but the paper says 'a friend.' Stay, it says a debtor! Why a debtor? Down with enigmas!"

"Laure, dear, think of some one that might — "

"I can't. I am quite at a loss."

"Since it is not the doctor, nor Monsieur Perrin, might it not be — for, after all, he would naturally be ashamed to appear before me."

"Before you?"

"Yes, Laure, is it quite certain that it might not be — "

"Who ? " asked Laure, nervously, catching a glimpse now.

"He who once pretended to love me!"

"Camille Dujardin ? "

"It was not I who mentioned his name," cried Josephine, hastily.

Laure turned pale.

"O, *mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*" she cried. "She loves that man still."

"No ! no ! no ! "

"You love him just the same as ever. O, it is wonderful — it is terrible — the power this man has over you, — over your judgment as well as your heart."

"No ! for I believe he has forgotten my very name ; don't you think so ? "

"Dear Josephine, can you doubt it ? "

"Forgive me."

"Come, you do doubt it."

"I do."

"Why ? for what reason ? "

"Because the words he said to me as we parted at that gate lie still at my heart : and oh, my sister, the voice we love seems the voice of truth itself. He said, 'I am to join the army of the Pyrenees, so fatal to our troops ; but say to me what you never yet have said, "Camille, I love you,"— and I swear I will come back alive.'

"So, then, I said to him, 'I love you,' — and he never came back."

"How could he come here ? a deserter, — a traitor ! "

"It is not true ! it is not in his nature ; inconstancy may be. Tell me that he never really loved me, and I will believe you ; but not that he is a coward. Let me weep over my past love, not blush for it."

"Past ? You love him to-day as you did three years ago ! "

"No ! I tell you I do not. I love no one. I never shall love any one again."

"But him. It is that love which turns your heart against others. You love him, dearest, or why should you fancy our secret benefactor could be Camille ? "

"Why ? Because I was mad ! because it is impossible ; but I see my folly. Let us go in, my sister."

"Go, love, I will follow you ; but don't you care to know who *I* think left the purse for us ? "

"No," said Josephine, sadly and doggedly ; she added with cold nonchalance, "I dare say time will show " ; and she went slowly in, her hand to her head.

"Her birthday ! "

CHAPTER VI.

"I WILL see her tree planted," thought Laure, "for she has forgotten it, and everything, and everybody but that — "

And she ran off to join the group. Turning the corner rapidly, she found Jacintha suspiciously near : and, above all, walking away towards the tree : away from where ?

Laure burned with anger, and, as she passed Jacintha, she wheeled about, and gave her a look like red lightning. It came like a slap in the face. Jacintha, meantime, had got ready an amazing dogged, unconscious face ;

"And o'er the impassive ice the lightnings play."

This gallant and praiseworthy effort was but partially successful. She could command her features, but not her blood : she felt it burn her cheek under the fire of Laure's eye. And in the evening, when Laure suddenly beckoned to her, and said in a significant way, "I want to speak to you, Jacintha," the faithful domestic felt like giving way at the knees and sinking down flat ; so she stood up like Notre Dame outwardly, and wore an expression of satisfaction and agreeable expectation on her impenetrable mug.

Laure drove in an eye.

"Who put that purse there ? " she asked in a half-threatening tone.

"Mademoiselle Laure, I don't know, but I have my suspicions; and if mademoiselle will give me a few days, I think I can find out for sure."

"How many days? because I am impatient."

"Say a fortnight, mademoiselle."

"That is a long time; well, it is agreed."

And so these two parted without a word openly uttered on either side about that which was uppermost in both their minds.

"Come," thought Jacintha, "I am well out of it: if I can find that out, she won't give it me for listening; and it is a fair bargain, especially for me, for I know who left the purse; but I was n't going to tell her that all in a moment."

Now Jacintha, begging her pardon, did not know; but she strongly suspected young Riviere of being the culprit who had invented this new sort of burglary, — breaking into honest folk's premises in the dead of night, and robbing them of their poverty, instead of their wealth, like the good old-fashioned burglars.

She waited quietly, expecting every day to see her dish-clout waving from the tree at the back, and to hear him tell her of his own accord how cleverly he had done the trick.

No.

Day after day passed away, and no clout. The fortnight was melting, and Jacintha's patience. She resolved: and one morning she cut two bunches of grapes, and pulled some nectarines, put them in a basket, covered them with a napkin, and called on M. Edouard Riviere at his lodging. She was ushered into that awful presence; and, so long as the servant was in hearing, all her talk was about the fruit she had brought him in return for his game. The servant being gone, she dropped the mask.

"Well, it is all right!" said she, smiling and winking.

"What is all right?"

"They have got the purse!"

"Have they! What purse I don't know what you allude to."

"No, of course not, Mr. Innocence: you did not leave a purse full of gold up at Beaurepaire!!!!"

"Well, I never said I did: purses full of gold are luxuries with which I am little acquainted."

"Very well," said Jacintha, biting her lip; "then you and I are friends no longer, that is all."

"O yes, we are."

"No! if you can't trust me, you are no friend of mine; ingrate! to try and deceive *me*. I know it was you!"

"Well, if you know, why ask me?" retorted Edouard, sharply.

"Better snap my nose off, had you not?" said Jacintha, reproachfully. "Confess it is odd your not showing more curiosity about it. Looks as if you knew all about it, eh?"

"But I *am* curious, and I wish to Heaven you would tell me what it is all about, instead of taking it into your head that I know already."

"Well, I will."

So Jacintha told him all about the baroness finding the purse, and on whom their suspicions had fallen.

"I wish it had been *I*," said Edouard; "but tell me, dear, has it been of service, has it contributed to their comfort? that is the principal thing, — not who gave it."

On this Jacintha reflected, and fixing her gray eye on him she said: "Unluckily there were just two pieces two few."

"What a pity."

"No one of my ladies ever buys a new dress without the others having one too; now they found it would take two more gold pieces to give my three ladies a new suit of mourning each. So the money is put by till they can muster the other two."

"What, then," cried Edouard, "I must not hope to see them out again any the more for this money?"

"No! you see it was not quite enough."

Riviere's countenance fell.

"Well," said Jacintha, assuming a candid tone, "I see it was not you, but really at first I suspected you."

"It is nothing to be ashamed of, if I had done it."

"No! indeed. How foolish to suspect you, was it not? You shall have the grapes all the same."

"O, thank you: they come from Beaurepaire?"

"Yes. Good by. Don't be sad. They will come out again as soon as they can afford the mourning"; she added, with sudden warmth, "you have not lost my clout?"

"No! no!"

"You had better give it me back: then my mind will be at ease."

"No, excuse me; it is my only way of getting a word with you."

"Why, you have never used it."

"But I may want to any day."

Jacintha, as she went home with her empty basket, knitted her black brows, and recalled the scene, and argued the matter *pro* and *con*.

"I don't know why he should face it out like that with me if it was he. Ah! but he would have been jealous, and a deal more inquisitive if it was not he. Well, anyway I have put him off his guard, and won't I watch him! If it is he, I'll teach him to try and draw the wool over Jacintha's eyes, and she his friend, — the monster."

Fortune co-operated with these malignant views. This very evening Dard declared himself, — that is, after proposing by implication and probable inference for the last seven years, he made a direct offer of his hand and digestive organs.

Now this gave Jacintha great pleasure. She could have kissed the little fellow on the spot.

So she said, in an off-hand way: "Well, Dard, if I were to take any one, it should be you: but I have pretty well made up my mind not to marry at all: at all events till my mistress can spare me."

"Gammon!" shouted Dard, "that is what they all say."

"Well, what everybody says must be true," said Jacintha, equivocating unworthily.

"Not unless they stick to it," objected Dard. "And that is a song they all drop at the church door, when they do get a chance."

"Well, I am not in such a hurry as to snap at such a small chance," retorted Jacintha, with a toss of her head.

So then the polite swain had to mollify her.

"Well, Dard," said she, "one good turn deserves another: if I am to marry you, what will you do for me?"

Dard gave a glowing description of what he would do for her as soon as she was his wife.

She let him know that was not the point: what would he do for her *first*.

He would do anything, — everything.

> We do know
> When the blood burns how prodigal the heart
> Lends the tongue vows. — HAMLET.

This brought the contracting parties to an understanding.

First, under a vow of secrecy, she told him young Riviere was in love with Josephine, and she was his confidante; then she told him how the youth had insulted her by attempting to deceive her about the purse; and, finally, Dard must watch his movements by night and day, that between them they might catch him out.

Dard made a wry face, — *dolus latet in generalibus* [free translation, "anything means nothing"]; when he vowed to do anything, everything, what not, and such small phrases, he never intended to do anything in particular: but he was in for it; and sentinel and spy were added to his little odd jobs. For the latter office his apparent stolidity qualified him, and so did his petty but real astuteness; moreover, he was daily primed by Jacintha, — a good soul, but no Nicodema. Meantime St. Aubin upheld Perrin as the secret benefactor, and bade them all observe that since

that day the notary had never been to the chateau.

The donor, whoever he was, little knew the pain he was inflicting on this distressed but proud family; or the hard battle that ensued between their necessities and their delicacy!! The ten gold pieces were a perpetual temptation, a daily conflict.

The words that accompanied the donation offered an excuse, and their poverty enforced it. Their pride and dignity opposed it; but these bright bits of gold cost them many a sharp pang.

The figures Jacintha laid before Riviere were purely imaginary. A mere portion of the two hundred francs would have enabled the poor girls to keep up appearances with the outside world, and yet to mourn their father openly. And it went through and through those tender, simple hearts, to think that they must be disunited, — even in so small a thing as dress; that, while their mother remained in her weeds, they must seem no longer to share her woe.

The baroness knew their feeling, and felt its piety, and yet must not say, Take five of these bits of gold, and let us all look what we are, — one.

Yet in this, as in everything else, they came to be all of one mind. They resisted, they struggled, and with a wrench they conquered day by day.

At last, by general consent, they locked up the tempter, and looked at it no more.

But the little bit of paper met a kinder fate. Laure made a little frame for it, and it was kept in a drawer in the *salon*, and often looked at and blessed. Their mother had despaired of human friendship, and with despondency on her lips she had found this paper with the sacred word "friend" written on it: it fell all in a moment on their aching hearts.

They could not tell whence it came, — this blessed word.

But who can tell whence comes the dew?

Science is in two minds about that.

Then let me go with the Poets, who say it comes from Heaven: we shall not go far wrong assigning any good thing to that source.

And even so that sweet word "friend" dropped like the dew from Heaven on these afflicted ones.

So they locked the potent gold away from themselves, and took the kind slip of paper to their hearts. *Aristo va.*

The fortnight elapsed, and Jacintha was no wiser. She had to beg a respite. Laure conceded it with an austere brow, smiling inwardly.

Meantime Dard, Jacintha's little odd sentinel, spy, gardener, lover, and all that, wormed himself with rustic cunning into the statesboy's confidence.

Treachery met its retribution. The statesboy made him his factotum, — i. e. yet another set of little odd jobs fell on him. He had always been struck by their natural variety; but now what with Jacintha's and what with Riviere's they seemed infinite.

At one hour he would be holding a long chain while Riviere measured the lands of Beaurepaire: at another he would be set to pump a farmer. Then it would be, "Back, Dard!" this meant he was to stand in a crescent while Edouard wrote a long calculation or made a sketch upon him, compendious writing-desk.

Then O, luxury of luxuries, he the laziest of the human race, though through the malice of fate the hardest worked, had to call citizen Riviere in the morning!

At night after all his toil he could count upon the refreshment of being scolded by Jacintha because he brought home the wrong sort of information, and had not the talent to coin the right. He did please her twice though; the first time was when he told her they were measuring the lands of Beaurepaire; and again when he found out the young citizen's salary, four hundred francs on the first of every month.

"That brat to have four hundred francs a month!" cried Jacintha.

"Dard, I will give you a good supper to-night."

Dard believed in her affection for a moment, for with one of his kidney the proof of the pudding, &c.

"And whilst I am cooking it here is a little job for you, — to fill up the time."

"Ugh!"

Jacintha had blacked twenty yards of string, and cut down half a dozen bells that were never used now.

"You shall put them up again when times mend," said she.

All Dard had to do now was to draw a wide magic circle all around the lemon-tree, and so fix the bells that they should be out of sight, and should ring if a foot came against the invisible string.

This little odd job was from that night incorporated into Dard's daily existence. He had to set the trap and bells at dusk every evening, and from that moment till bedtime Jacintha went about her work with half her mind out of doors, half in, and her ear on full cock.

One day St. Aubin met the notary ambling. He stopped him, and holding up his finger said playfully: —

"We have found you out."

The notary turned pale.

"O," cried the doctor, "this is pushing sensibility too far."

The notary stammered.

"A good action done slyly is none the less a good action."

This explanation completed the notary's mystification.

"But you are a worthy man," cried St. Aubin, warming.

The notary bowed.

"They cannot profit by your liberality, but they feel it deeply. And you will be rewarded in a better world. It is I who tell you so."

The notary muttered indistinctly. He was a man of moderate desires; would have been quite content if there had been no other world in perspective. He had studied this, and made it pay, — did not desire a better, — sometimes feared a worse.

"Ah!" said Monsieur St. Aubin, "I see how it is; we do not like to hear ourselves praised, do we? When shall we see you at the chateau?"

"As soon as I have good news to bring." And Perrin, anxious to avoid such a shower of compliments, spurred the dun, and cantered away.

CHAPTER VII.

"Mademoiselle Laure!"

"Who is that?"

"Me, mademoiselle?"

"And who is me?"

"Jacintha. Are you sleepy, mademoiselle?"

"Ah, yes!"

"Then don't! — you must rise directly."

"Must I? Why? Ah! the chateau is on fire!"

"No! no! — great news. I may be mistaken, but I don't think I am, — I am sure not, however."

"Ah! the purse! — the purse!"

"No other thing. Listen, mademoiselle. Dard has watched a certain person this month past, by my orders. Well, mademoiselle, last night he got his pay, — four hundred francs, — and what do you think, he told Dard he must be called an hour before daybreak. Something *must be* up, — something *is* up!"

"That thing is me!" cried Laure. "Behold, *I* am up! You good girl, when did you know all this?"

"Only since last night."

"Why did n't you tell me last night, then?"

"I had more sense. You would not have slept a wink. I have n't. Mademoiselle, there is no time to spare; why, the sun will be up in a few minutes. How quick could you dress to save your life?" asked Jacintha, a little fretfully; "in half an hour?"

"In half a minute," cried Laure; "fly and get Josephine up; there will be the struggle!"

Laure dressed herself furiously, and glided to Josephine's room. She found her languidly arranging herself in the usual style.

Laure flew at her like a tiger-cat, pinned her and hooked her, and twisted her about at a rare rate.

Josephine smiled and yawned.

While the sprightly Hebe was thus expediting the languid Venus, a bustle of feet was heard overhead, and down came Jacintha red as fire.

"O mesdemoiselles! I have been on the leads. There is somebody coming from the village, — I spied from behind the chimney. There is not a moment to lose, — the sun is up, too."

"But I am not dressed, my girl."

"Then you must come undressed," said Jacintha, brusquely.

"I feel as if I *should* come undressed," said Josephine, quietly. "You have not half fastened me. There, don't let me detain you, — go without me."

"Hear to that!" remonstrated Jacintha; "and it is for her the man does it all."

"For her?"

"For me?"

"Yes! mademoiselle, for you. Is that wonderful? You look at yourself in the glass, and that will explain all. No, don't, or we *shall* be too late. Now, ladies, come to your hiding-place."

"What! are we to hide?"

"Why, you don't think he will do it, if he sees you, mademoiselle. Besides, how are you to catch him unless I put you in ambush?"

"O you good girl," cried Laure. "Here, then, is one that originates ideas, — this is fun."

"I would rather dispense with that part of her idea," said Josephine. "What can I say to one I do not know, even if I catch him, — which I hope I shall not?"

"O, we have not caught him yet," said Jacintha; and, if you do, it won't be 'I,' it will be 'we.' You will be as bold as lions when you find yourselves two to one, and on your own ground. One and one make fifteen!"

"One and one make fifteen? Laure, you are dressed, demand an explanation, — and lend me a pin."

"I mean one young lady alongside another young lady has the courage of fifteen separate."

Jacintha now took the conduct of the expedition. She led her young mistresses on tiptoe to the great oak-tree. In with you, my ladies, and as still as mice."

They cast a comic look at one another, and obeyed the general.

"Now," said Jacintha, "if it is all right, I sha' n't stir; if it is all wrong, I shall come and tell you. Mother of Heaven, there is your blind up, — if he sees that, he will know you are up. I fly to draw it down, — adieu, mesdemoiselles."

"She is not coming back, Josephine?"

"No, my sister."

"Then my heart beats, that is all. Also, imagine us popping out on a stranger!"

"Such a phrase! — my sister!"

"It popped out, my sister!"

"Before we even think of anything else, be so kind as to fasten one or two of these hooks properly; should we really decide to charge the foe, it would be well to have as little disorder in our own lines as possible"; and Josephine's lip made a little curl that was inestimably beautiful. Laure obeyed. During the process, Josephine delivered herself, in a faint sort of way, of what follows: —

"See, nevertheless, how hard it is for our sex to resist energy. Jacintha is our servant; but she has energy and decision; this young woman, my supposed inferior, willed that I should be in an absurd position; what is the consequence? A minute ago I was in bed, — now I am here, — and the intervening events are a blank" (a little yawn).

"Josephine," said Laure, gravely, "such small talk is too fearful in this

moment of horrible agitation. A sudden thought! How come you to be so frightfully calm and composed, you, the greater poltroon of the two by ever so much?"

"By a hair's breadth, for instance."

"I see,—you have decided not to move from this ambush, come what may. Double coward and traitress, that is why you are cool. I flutter because at bottom I am brave, because I mean to descend like an eagle on him,— and fall dead with fright at his feet."

"Be tranquil — nobody is coming — be reasonable. What ground have we for supposing any one will come here this morning?"

"Josephine," cried Laure, eagerly, "that girl knows more than she has told us; she is in earnest. Depend upon it, as she says, there is something up. Kiss me, dear, that will give you courage — oh! how my heart beats, and remember 'one and one make — how many?'"

"How many figures do one cipher added to anoth— hush! hush!" cried Josephine, in a loud, agitated whisper, and held up a quivering hand, and her glorious bosom began to heave; she pointed several times in rapid succession westward through the tree. In a moment Laure had her eye glued to a little hole in the tree. Josephine had instinctively drawn back from a much larger aperture, through which she feared she could be seen.

"Yes," cried Laure, in a trembling whisper.

A figure stood in the park, looking over the little gate into the Pleasance.

Josephine kept away from the larger aperture through which she had caught a glimpse of him. Laure kept looking through the little hole, and back at Josephine, alternately; the figure never moved.

The suspense lasted several minutes.

Presently, Laure made a sudden movement, and withdrew from her peep-hole; and at the same moment Josephine could just hear the gate open.

The girls came together by one instinct in the centre of the tree, but did not dare to speak, scarce to breathe. After a while, Laure ventured cautiously to her peep-hole again; but she recoiled as if shot; he was walking straight for the oak-tree. She made a terrified signal to Josephine accordingly. He passed slowly out of sight, and the next time she peeped she could no longer tell where he was. Then the cautious Josephine listened at the side of the east fissure, and Laure squinted through the little hole in case he should come into sight again. While thus employed, she felt a violent pinch, and Josephine had seized her by the shoulder and was dragging her into one corner at the side of the east fissure. They were in the very act of crouching and flattening each into her own corner, when a man's shadow came slap into the tree between them, and there remained. Each put a hand quick and hard against her mouth, or each would have screamed out when the shadow joined them, forerunner, no doubt, of the man himself.

They glared down at it, and crouched and trembled, — they had not bargained for this; they had hidden to catch, not to be caught. At last they recovered sufficient composure to observe that this shadow, one half of which lay on the ground, while the head and shoulders went a little way up the wall of the tree, represented a man's profile, not his front face. The figure, in short, was standing between them and the sun, and was contemplating the chateau, not the tree.

Still, when the shadow took off its hat to Josephine, she would have screamed if she had not bitten her plump hand instead.

It wiped its brow with a handkerchief; it had walked fast, poor thing! The next moment it was away.

Sic transit gloria mundi.

They looked at one another and panted. They dared not before. Then Laure, with one hand on her heaving

bosom, shook her little white fist viciously at where the figure must be, and perhaps a comical desire of vengeance stimulated her curiosity. She now glided through the fissure like a cautious panther from her den; and noiseless and supple as a serpent began to wind slowly round the tree. She soon came to a great protuberance. Her bright eye peeped round it; her lithe body worked into the hollow, and was invisible to him she was watching. Josephine, a yard behind her, clung also to the oak, and waited with glowing eye and cheek for signals.

The cautious visitor had surveyed the ground, had strolled with mock carelessness round the oak, and was now safe at his goal. He was seen to put his hand in his pocket, to draw something out and drop it under the lemon-tree; this done, he was heard to vent a little innocent chuckle of intense satisfaction but of brief duration. For, the very moment she saw the purse leave his hand, Laure made a rapid signal to Josephine to wheel round the other side of the tree, and, starting together, with admirable concert, both the daughters of Beaurepaire swooped on him from opposite sides.

His senses were too quick, and too much on the alert, not to hear the rustle the moment they started; but it was too late then. They did not walk up to him, or even run. They came so fast they must, I think, have fancied they were running away instead of charging.

He knew nothing about their past tremors. All he saw or heard was — a rustle, then a flap on each side, as of great wings, and two lovely women were upon him with angelic swiftness.

"Ah!" he cried out, with a start of terror, and glanced from the first comer, Laure, to the park. His instinctive idea was to run that way. But Josephine was on that side, caught the look, and put up her hand, as much as to say, "You can't pass here."

In such situations, the mind works quicker than lightning. He took off his hat, and stammered an excuse: "Come to look at the oak." But Laure pounced on the purse, and held it up to Josephine.

He was caught. His only chance now was to bolt for the great gate and run, — but it was not the notary, — it was a poor little fellow who lost his presence of mind, or perhaps thought it rude to run when a lady told him to stand still. All he did was to crush his face into his two hands, round which his cheeks and neck now blushed red as blood. Blush? the young women could see the color rush like a wave to the very roots of his hair and the tips of his fingers.

CHAPTER VIII.

The moment our heroines, who, in that desperation which is one of the occasional forms of cowardice, had hurled themselves on the foe, saw they had caught a Chinese and not a Tartar, flash — the quick-witted poltroons exchanged a streak of purple lightning over the abashed and drooping head, and were two lionesses of valor and dignity in less than half a moment.

It was with the quiet composure of lofty and powerful natures that Josephine opened on him.

He gave a little wince when the first rich tone struck his ear.

"Compose yourself, monsieur; and be so good as to tell us who you are."

Edouard must answer. Now he could not speak through his hands; and he could not face a brace of lionesses; so he took a middle course, removed one hand, and, shading himself from Josephine with the other, he gasped out —

"I am — my name is Riviere; and I — I — O ladies!"

"Don't be frightened," said Laure, with an air of imperial clemency, "we are not very angry."

"Ah! thank you, mademoiselle."

"So," resumed Josephine, "tell us what interest have you in the fortunes of the Baroness de Beaurepaire?"

"I am so confused, or I could perhaps answer. Mademoiselle, forgive me; I don't know how it is, I seem not to have an idea left. Suffer me then, with the greatest respect, to take my leave." And he was for bolting.

"Not yet, monsieur," said Josephine. "Laure!"

Laure went off, looking behind her every now and then.

After a long silence, Edouard muttered: —

"Do you forgive me, mademoiselle?"

"Yes." Josephine colored and was not quite so stately. She added: "We should indeed be harsh judges, monsieur, if we — Ah! here *is* Laure with the other. Take these twenty louis which you have been so kind as to leave here." And her creamy hand held him out the two purses.

The boy started back and put up both his hands in a supplicatory attitude.

"O no! ladies — do not — pray do not! Let me speak to you. My ideas are coming back. I think I can say a word or two now, though not as I could wish. Do not reject my friendship. You are alone in the world; your father is dead; your mother has but you to lean on. After all, I am your neighbor, and neighbors should be friends. And I am your debtor; I owe you more than you could ever owe me; for ever since I came into this neighborhood I have been happy. O, no man was ever so happy as I, ever since one day I met you out walking. A single glance, a single smile from an angel has done this for me. I owe all my good thoughts, if I have any, to her. Before I saw her, I vegetated, — now I live. And you talk of twenty louis, — well then yes! I will obey you, — I will take them back. So then you will perhaps be generous in your turn. Since you mortify me in this, you will grant what you can grant without hurting your pride; you will accept my service, my devotion. You have no brother, — I have no sister. Let me be your brother, and your servant forever."

"Monsieur Riviere," said Josephine, with her delicate curl of her lip, "you offer us too much, and we have too little to give you in return. Ours is a falling house, and — "

"No! no! mademoiselle, you mistake, — you are imposed upon. You fancy you are poor, — others that do not care for you say so too; but I, who owe you so much, I have looked closer into your interests, — your estate is grossly mismanaged; forgive me for saying so. You are rich at this moment if you had but a friend, — a man of business. You are cheated through thick and thin, — it is abominable, — and no wonder; you are women and don't understand business, — you are aristocrats and scorn it."

"He is no fool," said Laure, naïvely.

"And you banish me who could be of such service to you and to madame the baroness. Yet you say you forgive my officiousness, but I fear you do not. Ah! no, this vile money has ruined me with you."

"No! monsieur, no! — you have earned and well merited our esteem."

"But not your acquaintance?"

The ladies both looked down a little ashamed.

"See now," said the boy, bitterly, "how reasonable etiquette is. If I had happened to dine at some house where you dined, and some person whom neither of us respected had said to you, 'Suffer me to present Monsieur Edouard Riviere to you,' I should have the honor and blessing of your acquaintance, — that would have been an introduction, — but all this is none, and you will never, never speak to me again."

"He is anything but a fool!" said Laure.

A look of ardent gratitude from Edouard.

"He is very young," said Josephine, "and thinks to give society new rules; society is too strong to be dictated to by him or you; let us be serious; approach, Monsieur Edouard."

Edouard came a little nearer, and fixed two beseeching eyes on her a moment, then lowered them.

"Ere we part, and part we must, — for your path lies one way, ours another, — hear me, who speak in the name of all this ancient house. Your name is not quite new to me, — I believe you are a Republican officer, monsieur; but you have acted *en gentilhomme.*"

"Mademoiselle —"

"May your career be brilliant, Monsieur Edouard! may those you have been taught to serve, and whom you greatly honor by serving, be more grateful to you than circumstances permit this family to be; we, who were beginning to despair of human goodness, thank you, monsieur, for showing us the world is still embellished with hearts like yours!" And she suddenly held him out her hand like a pitying goddess, her purple eye dwelling on him with all the heaven of sentiment in it.

He bowed his head over her hand, and kissed it again and again.

"You will make him cry, that will be the next thing," said Laure, with a little gulp.

"No! no!" said Josephine, "he is too much of a man to cry."

"O no, mademoiselle, I will not expose myself."

"And see," said Josephine, in a motherly tone, "though we return your poor gold, we keep both purses; Laure takes this one, my mother and I this one; they will be our *souvenirs* of one who wished to oblige without humiliating us."

"And I think," said Laure, "as his gold is so fugitive, I had better imprison it in this purse, which I have just made, — there, — it would be uncourteous to return him his money loose, you know!"

"Ah! mademoiselle, what goodness! O, be assured it shall be put to no such base use as carrying money."

"Adieu, then, Monsieur Riviere!"

The two sisters were now together, their arms round one another.

"Mademoiselle Laure, Mademoiselle Josephine, conceive if you can my happiness, and my disappointment, — adieu! — adieu! — adieu!"

He was gone as slowly and unwillingly as it is possible to go.

"Inaccessible!" said he to himself, sadly, as he went slowly home; "quite inaccessible! Yet there was a moment after the first surprise when I thought — but no. All the shame of such a surprise, and yet I am no nearer them than before. I am very unhappy! No! I am not. I am the happiest man in France."

Then he acted the scene all over again, only more adroitly, and blushed again at his want of presence of mind, and concocted speeches for past use, and was hot and cold by turns.

"Poor boy," said Josephine, "he is gone away sad, and that has saddened me. But I did my duty, and he will yet live to thank me for freezing at once an attachment I could never have requited."

"Have you finished your observations, love?" asked Laure, dryly.

"Yes, Laure."

"Then — to business."

"To business?"

"Yes! — no! don't go in yet. A little arrangement between us two arises necessarily out of this affair, — that is how the notary talks, — and it is as well to settle it at once, say I; because, love, in a day or two, you know, it might be too late — ahem!"

"But settle what?"

"Which of us two takes him, dear, — that is all."

"Takes whom?"

"Edouard!" explained Laure, demurely, lowering her eyes.

Josephine glared with wonder and comical horror upon the lovely minx.

And after a long look too big for words, she said: —

"Next did I not understand Jacintha to say that it was me the poor child dreams of?"

"O, you shall have him, my sister," put in the sly minx, warmly, "if you insist on it."

"What words are these? I shall be angry at the end."

"Ah, I must not annoy you by too great importunity, neither. You have only to say you decline him."

"Decline him? poor boy! He has never asked me."

"In short, on one pretence or another, you decline to decline him."

"How dare you, Laure? Of course I decline him."

"Thank you, my sister," cried Laure, hastily, and kissed her; "it is the prettiest present you ever gave me, — except your love. Ah! what is that on your hand? It is wet, — it looks like the dew on a lily. It is a tear from his eye, — you cruel woman."

"No! it was when I spoke kindly to him. I remember now, I did feel something! Poor child!"

"Heart of marble! that affects pity, — an hour after. Stay! since our agreement, this belongs to me": and she drew out a back comb, and down fell a mass of rich brown hair. She swept the dew off the lily with it, and did it up again with a turn of the hand. Josephine sighed deeply.

"My sister, you frighten me. Do not run thus wantonly to the edge of a precipice. Take warning by me. O, why did we come out? Jacintha, what have you done!!"

"This dear Josephine, with her misgivings! confess, you take me for a fool."

"I take you for a child that will play with fire if not prevented."

"At nineteen and a half one is no longer a child. O the blindness of our elders! I know you by heart, Josephine, but you only know a little bit of me. You have only observed the side I turn to you, whom I love better than I shall love any man. Keep your pity for Monsieur Riviere if ever he does fall into my hands, not for me. In a word, Josephine, the hour is come for making you a revelation. I am not a child. I am a woman!"

"Ah! all the worse."

"But not the sort of woman you are, — and Heaven be thanked for both our sakes I am not!"

Josephine opened her eyes. "She never talked like this to me before, — this is your doing, Monsieur Riviere. Unhappy girl, what are you, then? — not like me, who love you so!!!!!"

"No, my sister, I have the honor to be your opposite."

"My opposite!" cried Josephine, very ruefully.

"I am a devil!!" exclaimed Laure, in a mysterious whisper, but with perfect gravity and conviction, aiming at Josephine with her forefinger, to point the remark. She allowed just one second for this important statement to sink into her sister's mind, then straightway set to and gambolled in a most elfish way round and round her as Josephine moved stately and thoughtful across the grass to the chatean.

It may well be supposed what was the subject of conversation at breakfast, and indeed all the day. The young ladies, however, drew only the broader outlines of their story; with a natural reserve, they gave no direct hint that they thought Monsieur Riviere was in love with one of them. They left their hearers to see that or not, as might be.

The baroness, on her part, was not disposed to put love ideas into her daughters' heads; she therefore, though too shrewd not to suspect Dan Cupid's hand in this, reserved her suspicions, and spoke of Riviere's act as any one might, looking only at its delicate, generous, and disinterested side.

Male sagacity, in the person of St. Aubin, prided itself on its superior shrewdness, held the same language

as the others, but smiled secretly all the time at female credulity.

Scarce three days had elapsed, three weary days to a friend of ours, when Jacintha, looking through the kitchen window, saw the signal of distress flying from a tree in the park. She slipped out, and there was Edouard Riviere. Her tongue went off with a clash at the moment of contact with him, like a cymbal. First, she exulted over him: "How had it answered trying to draw the wool over Jacintha's eyes, eh?" then she related her own sagacity, telling him, as such characters are apt to, half the story. She suppressed Dard's share, for she might want a similar service from Dard again, — who knows? But she let him know it was she who had set the ladies in ambush at that time in the morning.

At this young Riviere raised his hands, and eyed her as a moral alligator. She faced the examination with sold composure, lips parted in a brazen smile, and arms akimbo.

"O Jacintha, you can stand there and tell me this; what malice! all because out of delicacy, misplaced perhaps, I did not like to tell you."

"So then you don't see I have been your best friend, ungratefully as you used me?"

"No, Jacintha, indeed I cannot see that, — you have ruined me. Judge for yourself."

Then he told her all that had happened in the Pleasance. Very little of it was news to her. Still it interested and excited her to hear it all told in a piece, and from his point of view.

"So you see, my poor Jacintha, you have got me dismissed, kindly, but oh! so coldly and firmly, — all hope is now dead — alas!"

"Ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!"

"Jacintha, do you laugh at the extinction of my hopes?"

"Ha! ha! so she has given you *congé?*"

"Yes, and all that remains for me —"

"Is not to take it," said Jacintha.

"O no!" said Riviere, sadly, but firmly; "debarred her love, let me at least have her respect."

"Her respect? how can she respect a man who turns tail at the first word?"

"But that word is hers, whose lightest word a true and loyal lover is bound to obey to his own cost. Am I not to take a lady at her word?"

"Oh! oh! little sot, — no. I must run and make the coffee."

"Malediction on the coffee! how can you have the heart to think of coffee now, dear Jacintha? Do, pray, explain."

"What is the use, if you will go and dream that a lady is a man?"

"No, no! I won't fancy anything; tell me about women, then, if you think you can understand them."

"I will then. Above all mortal things they despise faint-hearted men. They are on the lookout for something stronger than a woman. A woman hates to have to make the advances. She likes to be always retreating, yet never be off. She is not content to take what she wants, and thank God for it, and that is a man. She must play with it like a cat with a mouse. She must make difficulties. The man *he* is to trample on them. She made them to no other end. If he is such a fool as to let them trample on him, Heaven have mercy on him, for *she* won't! Her two delights are, saying 'no' half a dozen times, and saying 'yes' at last. If you take her at her word at the first 'no,' you cause her six bitter disappointments; for then she can't get to say the other 'no's,' and, worst of all, she can't get to say the 'yes' that she was looking forward to, and that was in her heart all along. Now, my young mistress is half angel and half woman, so, if you give her up because she bids you, she will only despise you; but if it was my other young lady or me, we should hate you as well."

"Hate me? for self-denial and obedience?"

"No! Hate you for being a fool! Hate you with a bitterness — there, hate you as you could not hate anything."

"I can't believe it! What horrible injustice!"

"Justice! who looks to us for justice? We are good creatures, but we don't trouble our heads with justice; it is a word you shall never hear a woman use, unless she happens to be doing some monstrous injustice at that very moment; that is our rule about justice — so, there."

"Jacintha, your views of your sex are hard and cynical. Women are nobler and better than men!"

"Ay! ay! you see them a mile off. I see them too near: they can't pass for rainbows here."

"Pass for rainbows — he! he! Speak for yourself, Jacintha, and for coquettes, and for vulgar women; but do not blaspheme those angelic natures with which I was for one short moment in contact."

"Ah bah! we are all tarred with the same stick, angels and all, — the angels that wear stays."

"I cannot think so. Besides, you were not there; you did not hear how kindly yet how firmly she thanked, yet bade me adieu."

"I tell you, a word in a man's mouth is a thing, but in a woman's it is only a word." At this point, without any previous warning, she went into a passion like gunpowder kindled. "Take your own way!" she cried; "this boy knows more than I do. So be it, — let us speak no more of it."

"Cruel Jacintha, to quarrel with me, who have no other friend. There — I am your pupil; for, after all, your sagacity is great. Advise me like a sister — I listen."

"Like a sister! Ah, my child, do not say that."

"Why not? Yes, do."

"No; good advice is never welcome."

"It is so seldom given kindly."

"O, as to that, I could not speak unkindly to you, my little cabbage; but I shall make you unhappy, and then I shall be unhappy; for you see, with all our faults, we have not bad hearts."

"Speak, Jacintha."

"I am going to; and when I have spoken, I shall never see your pretty face again so near to mine, — so you see I am disinterested; and — O how I hate telling the truth!" cried she, with pious fervor; "it always makes everybody miserable."

"Jacintha, remember what you said in its favor the first time we met."

"I cannot remember for my part, and what signifies what I said? Words — air! Well, my poor child, I will advise you like a mother, — give her up."

"Give her up?"

"Think no more of her: for there is a thing in your way that is as hard to get over as all her nonsensical words would be easy."

"O, what is it? You make me tremble."

"It is a man."

"Ah!"

"There is another man in the way."

"Who? — that vile old doctor?"

"O, if it was no worse than that! No! it is a young one. O, you don't know him, — he has not been here for years; but what of that, if his image lies in her heart? And it does. I listened the other day, and I heard something that opened my eyes. I am cruel to you, my son, — forgive me!"

Jacintha scarcely dared look at her feeble-minded novice. She did not like to see her blow fall and him stagger and turn pale under it. When she did look, lo and behold! he was red instead of pale.

"What is he?" was the question, in a stern voice.

"He is a soldier."

"I am glad of that: then he will fight, and I 'll kill him."

"Hear to that now!"

"And you think I will give in now! resign her to an unworthy rival?"

"Who said he was unworthy?"

"I say so."

"What makes you fancy that?"

"Because he never comes near the place, because he neglects what none but a villain could neglect, the greatest treasure in the world. No! he deserves to lose it, — and he shall lose it. Thank you, Jacintha! you show me my folly. I will not take her *congé* now, rely on it. No! no! if she bade me do anything in the world to please her, and her alone, I would do it, though I had to go through fire and water and blood, and break my heart doing it. But if she asks me to make way for a rival, I answer, — never! — never! — never!"

"But if she loves him?"

"A passing fancy, and the object of it unworthy: it is my duty to cure her of a misplaced attachment that can never make her happy, sweet angel! she will live to thank me, — to bless me! — I say, whose side are you on, — his or mine?"

"Wretch, do you ask me?"

"Do they walk in the park?"

"Half an hour every day."

"What time?"

"Uncertain."

"And I can't see into the park for that great infernal elm-tree at the corner; it just blocks up my window, — if I cut it down some night, will you tell?"

"Not I. Would you really have the forehead to cut down one of the Beaurepaire elms? — holy saints!"

"Look for it to-morrow," said he, grimly, "and look low enough or you won't see it. I'll cut one of your elms down with as little remorse as I would half a dozen rivals."

"He is mad, — after all I want firewood, and above all I want brushwood for my oven: for you are to understand, my friend, there is some meal come in from the tenants, and so —"

"That's right! think kitchen! talk kitchen! pray does your soul live in a kitchen as well as your body?"

"Monsieur!"

"Forgive me, my blood is on fire, I take your advice; you shall never have to spur me again. It is clear you know the sex best: she shall make as many difficulties as she pleases. She shall say "no" twelve times instead of six if it amuses her: I will court her, I will besiege her, I'll fight for her against all the soldiers on earth, and all the fiends in you know where." Whir, — he was away.

Jacintha gazed after her pupil and firework with ardent admiration so long as his graceful, active figure was in sight.

Then she fell into a revery, — an unusual mood with this active personage.

It is not customary, in polite fiction, to go into the reflecting part of a servant-maid: let us therefore make a point of doing it, for to be vulgar in the eyes of snobs and snobbesses is no mean distinction.

"Look there now! — Humph — they say you should give and take. Well, I gave a lesson: and now I have taken one.

"From fourteen to fourscore a man is a man, and a woman is a woman. Write that in your mass books, for it is as true as gospel. Ah well! school is never over while we *are* in the world. I thought I knew something too: but I was all behind. Now to me a woman is the shallowest thing the good God ever made. I can plumb it with my forefinger. But to a man they are as deep as the ocean. And, no doubt, men can read one another: but they beat me. She put up a straw between him and her, and he fell back as if it was Goliah's spear, that was as thick as — what was it as thick as? I showed him an iron door between them, and he flies at it as if it was a sheet of brown paper. MOTHER OF HEAVEN! MY POT! MY POT!"

She fled wildly.

CHAPTER IX.

"Oh! madame the baroness, there is a tree blown down in the park."

"Impossible, child! there was no wind at all last night."

"No, madame, but there was a night or two ago."

Laure giggled.

"Well, mademoiselle, that might loosen it!"

Laure laughed; but the baroness was grave.

"Let us all go and look at it," said she, sadly; a tree was an old friend to her.

There lay the monster on the earth that was ploughed and harrowed by its hundred arms and thousand fingers; its giant proportions now first revealed by the space of earth it covered, and the frightful gap its fall left in the air and the prospect. The doctor inspected the tree in detail, and especially the stump, and said, "Humph!"

The baroness looked only at the mass and the ruin.

"An ill omen, my children," said she. "It stood out the storm; and then one calm night it fell. And so it will be with the house of Beaurepaire."

"Ah, well," said Jacintha, in a comfortable tone, "now you are down, we must do the best we can with you. I wanted some firewood, — and I wanted small wood terribly."

The baroness shrugged her shoulders at this kitchen philosophy, and moved away with Josephine.

The doctor detained Laure. "Now it is no use telling your mother, to annoy her, but this tree has been cut down."

"Impossible!"

"Fact. Come and look at the stub. O, I have stood and seen thousands of trees felled, — it is an interesting operation; comes next to taking off a — hem! See how clean three fourths of the wood have come away. They have had the cunning to cut three feet above the ground, too; but this is not Nature's work, — it is man's. Laure, it wanted but this; you have an enemy, — a secret enemy."

"Ah!" cried Laure, with flashing eyes, and making her hand into an angular snowball; "oh! that I had him here! I'd — Ah! ah!"

This doughty threat ended in two screams, for a young gentleman sprang from the road over the hedge, and alighted close to them. He took off his hat, and, blushing like a rose, poured out a flood of excuses.

"Mademoiselle — monsieur, I saw that a large tree had fallen, and my curiosity — forgive my indiscretion," — and he affected to retreat, but cast a lingering look at the fallen tree.

"Remain, monsieur," said St. Aubin, politely; "and, as your eyes are younger than mine, I will even ask you to examine the stump and also the tree, and tell me whether my suspicions are correct. Has this tree fallen by accident, or by the hand of man? Pronounce, monsieur."

Riviere darted on the stump with the fire of curiosity in his face, and examined it keenly. His deportment was not bad comedy.

He pronounced: "This tree has been cut down. See, mademoiselle," cried the young rogue, determined to bring her into the conversation, "observe this cut here in the wood; look, here are the marks of the teeth of a saw."

This brought Laure close to him, and he gave a prolix explanation to keep her there, and asked her whether she saw this, and whether she saw that; so then she was obliged to speak to him. He proved to their entire satisfaction that somebody had cut down the elm.

"The rogue!" cried St. Aubin.

"The wretch!" cried Laure.

Riviere looked down, and resumed his inspection of the stump.

"O that I had him!" cried Laure, still at fever heat.

"I wish you had, mademoiselle," said Edouard, with a droll look.

Then, with an air of imposing gravity: "Monsieur," says he, "I have the honor to serve the government in this district, as you may perhaps be aware."

St. Aubin looked to Laure for explanation.

She would not give any, because by revealing the young man's name she would have enabled St. Aubin to put the purse and this jump over the hedge together. She colored at the bare thought, but said nothing.

Riviere went on.

"If you really suspect this has been done out of malice, I will set an inquiry on foot."

"You are very good, monsieur. It certainly is a mysterious affair."

"In short, give yourself no further anxiety about it, sir. I take it into my hands, — in doing so, I merely discharge my duty; need I add, mademoiselle, that duty is for once a pleasure. If any of the neighbors is the culprit, it will transpire; if not, still the present government is, I assure you, sir, a Briareus, and one of its hands will fall sooner or later on him who has dared to annoy you, mademoiselle."

As a comment on these words of weight, he drew out his pocket-book with such an air: made a minute or two, and returned it to his pocket.

"Monsieur, mademoiselle, receive once more my excuses for my indiscreet curiosity, which I shall never cease to regret, unless it should lead to the discovery of what you have at heart." And he bowed himself away.

"A charming young man, my dear."

"What, that little buck, — do you see charms in him? — where?"

"Buck? a young Apollo, beaming with goodness as well as intelligence."

"Oh! oh! oh! doctor."

"I have not seen such a face for ever so long," cried the doctor, getting angry.

"I don't desire to see such another for ever so long."

"Confess, at least, that his manners are singularly graceful."

"Republican ease, doctor, — admire it — those who *can*."

"It was the respectful ease of a young person not desirous to attract attention to his own grace, but simply to be polite."

"Now I thought his flying over our hedge, and taking our affairs on him and his little pocket-book, a great piece of effrontery."

"If it had not been done with equal modesty and deference," replied St. Aubin; "but the poor boy is a Republican. So you cannot be just. O politics! politics! — you madden the brain, — you bandage the judgment, — you corrupt the heart, — let us see whether they have blinded your very eyes. Come, did you notice his color, — roses and lilies side by side? Come, now."

"A boy's complexion, staring red and white! — Yes."

"And his eyes full of soul."

"Yes, he had wildish eyes. If you want to be stared out of countenance, send for Monsieur Riv— hum — what did he say his name was?"

"I forget. A figure like Antinous, with all Diana's bounding grace."

"O, he can jump high enough to frighten one: enchanting quality."

"Well, mademoiselle, I shall not subject him to further satire by praising him. He serves France and not the Bourbons; and is therefore a monster, ugly and even old. Let us speak of more important matters."

"If you please," said Laure, dryly. And they did.

And the effect of the rise in themes was that Laure became distracted, and listened badly; and every now and then she slipped back to the abandoned subject, and made a number of half-concessions, one at a time, in favor of the young Republican's looks, manners, and conduct, — all to please the doctor. So that at last she and St. Aubin were not so very far apart in their estimate of the youth. Arrived at the park gate leading into the

Pleasance, she turned suddenly round, beamed and blushed all over with pleasure, and put her arms round the puzzled doctor's neck and kissed him; then scudded off like a rabbit after her sister who was on the south terrace.

"Dard, I've a little job for you," cried Jacintha, cheerily.

"Ugh! oh! have you?"

"You must put up the grindstone. Stop! don't go off, — that is not all. Put a handle in it, and then sharpen the great axe, — the hatchet is not a bit of use."

"Any more?"

"Yes; to-morrow you must go into the park with your wheelbarrow, and cut me billet wood for up stairs and small wood for my oven."

The much-enduring man set about this new job.

The demoiselles De Beaurepaire, coming out into the park for their afternoon walk, saw a figure hacking away at the fallen tree. They went towards it near enough to recognize Dard: then they turned and took their usual walk. They made sure Jacintha had ordered him to do it.

They had not been in the park a minute before a telescope was levelled from a window at them, and the next moment M. Edouard was running up the road to Beaurepaire.

Now as he came near the fallen tree he heard loud cries for help, followed by groans of pain. He bounded over the hedge, and there was Dard hanging over his axe faint and moaning.

"What is the matter? — what is the matter?" cried Edouard, running to him.

"Oh! oh! — cut my foot."

Edouard looked, and turned sick, for there was a gash right through Dard's shoe, and the blood welling up through it. But, recovering himself by an effort of the will, he cried out: —

"Courage, my lad! don't give in, — thank Heaven there's no artery there. O dear, it is a terrible cut! Let us get you home, that is the first thing! Can you walk?"

"Lord bless you, no! nor stand either without help."

Edouard flew to the wheelbarrow, and reversing it spun a lot of billet out.

"Ye must not do that," said Dard, with all the energy he was capable of in his present condition, — "why, that is Jacintha's wood."

"To the Devil with Jacintha and her wood too!" cried Edouard, "a man is worth more than a fagot. Come, Dard, I shall wheel you home: it is only just across the park."

With some difficulty he lifted him into the barrow.

"Ah! how lucky," he cried, "I have got my shooting-jacket on, so here's my brandy flask: take a suck at it, old fellow, — and courage!"

Dard stretched out his hand with sudden animation for the flask, and it was soon glued to his lips.

Now the ladies, as they walked, saw a man wheeling a barrow across the park, and took no particular notice; but, as Riviere was making for the same point, presently the barrow came near enough for them to see a man's head and arms in it. Laure was the first to notice this.

"Look! look!" said she, "if he is not wheeling Dard in the barrow now."

"Who?"

"Do you ask who? Who provides all our amusement?"

"Laure, I do not like this. I am afraid there is something wrong. Consider, Monsieur Riviere would not wheel Dard all across the park for amusement."

"O let us run and see," cried Laure.

Now Riviere did not intend them to see; he had calculated on getting to the corner a considerable time before the promenaders. But they hastened their speed, and defeated his intention. He had taken his coat off too, and made a great effort to beat them.

"Dard," said he, "now here are the young ladies, what a pity, — put

my coat over your foot, that is a good fellow."

"What for?" said Dard, sulkily. "No! let them see what they have done with their little odd jobs: this is my last for one while. I sha'n't go on two legs again this year."

The ladies came up with them.

"O monsieur," said Josephine, "what is the matter?"

"We have met with a little accident, mademoiselle, that is all. Dard has hurt his foot, — nothing to speak of, but I thought he would be best at home."

Laure raised the coat which Riviere in spite of Dard had flung over his foot, and removed it.

"O, he is bleeding! Dard is bleeding! O my poor Dard. Oh! oh! oh!"

"Hush! Laure! Laure!"

"No! don't put him out of heart, mademoiselle. Take another pull at the flask, Dard. If you please, ladies, I must have him home without delay."

"O yes, but I want him to have a surgeon," cried Josephine. "Ah! why are we so poor, and no horses nor people to send off as we used to have?"

"Mademoiselle, have no fears. Dard shall have the best surgeon in the district by his side in less than an hour: the town is but two short leagues off."

"Have you a horse then?"

"No; but I am as good a runner as any for miles round. I'll run it out in half an hour or die at it, and I'll send the surgeon up full gallop."

"Ah! Heaven bless you, monsieur, you have a good heart," cried Josephine.

"O yes! Heaven bless him," cried Laure.

He was already gone: but these sweet words rang in his ears and ran warm round and round his heart, as he straightened his arms and his back to the work. When they had gone about a hundred yards, a single snivel went off in the wheelbarrow.*

Five minutes after, Dard was at home in charge of his grandmother, his shoe off, his foot in a wet linen cloth; and the statesman, his coat tied round the neck, squared his shoulders and ran the two short leagues out. He ran them in thirty-five minutes, found the surgeon at home, told the case, pooh-poohed that worthy's promise to go to the patient presently, darted into his stable, saddled the horse, brought him round, saw the surgeon into the saddle, started him, dined at the restaurateur's, strolled back, and was in time to get a good look at the chateau of Beaurepaire before the sun set on it.

CHAPTER X.

Jacintha came into Dard's cottage that evening.

"So you have been and done it, my man," cried she, cheerfully and rather roughly; then sat down and rocked herself, with her apron over her head.

She explained this anomalous proceeding to his grandmother privately.

"I thought I would keep his heart up anyway; but you see I was not fit."

Calmer, she comforted Dard, and ended by cross-questioning him. The young ladies had told her what they had seen, and, though Dard was too wrapped up in himself to dwell with any gusto upon Edouard's zeal and humanity, still, as far as facts went, he confirmed the ladies' comments.

Jacintha's heart yearned towards the young man. She was in the town next day making a purchase or two, so she called on him.

"I thought I would just step in to put a question to you. Would you like to get a word with her alone?"

"O Jacintha!"

* I beg the polite writer's pardon: first, for wheeling it on to the scene at all; secondly, for not calling it a monotroch.

"Hush! don't shout like that; why, you may be sure she is alone sometimes, though not very often. They love one another so, those two."

Jacintha then developed her plan.

As the clout was his signal, so she must have a signal to show when she wanted to speak to him, and that signal should be a sheet, which she would hang over the battlement of Beaurepaire Chateau.

"So when you see a white sheet, you come to me, — the quicker the better."

"You dear girl."

"O, it is the least I can do now. You know what I mean. I won't speak about it. Words in a woman's mouth, — I told you what they are. No, I won't end in steam, like boiling water does. I won't *say*, I 'll *show* you what you have done, my angel."

Her eyes told him all the same.

"Where is my clout? You never left it out there on the tree, did you?" and she looked solemn.

"Jacintha! on my knees I demand pardon for my fatal heedlessness."

Jacintha put her hand under her apron and pulled out the clout.

"There," said she, and threw it him. "Now suppose you had wanted to speak to me, — ah well, we can't have all. You have a good heart, but no head."

Dard's grandmother had a little house, a little land, a little money, and a little cow. She could just keep Dard and herself, and her resources enabled Dard to do so many little odd jobs for love, yet keep his favorite organ tolerably filled.

"Go to bed, my little son, since you are hashed," said Dard's grandmother.

"Bed be hanged," cried he. "What good is bed? That 's another silly old custom wants doing away with. It weakens you, — it turns you into train oil, — it is the doctor's friend, and the patient's enemy. Many a one shuts up through taking to bed, that could have got through his trouble, if he had kept his feet like a man. If I was dying I would not go to bed till I went to the bed with a spade in it. No! sit up like Julius Cæsar, and die as you lived, in your clothes: don't strip yourself: let the old women strip you, — that is their delight laying out a chap: that is the time they brighten up, the old sorceresses." He concluded this amiable rhapsody, the latter part of which was levelled at a lugubrious weakness of his grandmother's for the superfluous embellishment of the dead, by telling her it was bad enough to be tied by the foot like an ass, without settling down on his back like a cast sheep. "Give me the arm-chair. I 'll sit in it, and if I have any friends they will show it now: they will come and tell me what is going on in the village, for I can't get out to see it and hear it, they must know that."

Seated in state in his granny's easy-chair, the loss of which after thirty years' use made her miserable, she could n't tell why, le Sieur Dard awaited his friends.

His friends did not come.

The rain did, and poured all the afternoon. Night came, and solitude. Dard boiled over with bitterness.

"They are then a lot of pigs; all those fellows I have drank with at Bigot's and Simmet's. Down with all fair-weather friends!!"

The next day the sun shone, the air was clear, and the sky blue.

"Ah! let us see now," cried Dard.

Alas! no fellow-drinkers, no fellow-smokers, came to console their hurt fellow. And Dard, who had boiled with anger yesterday, was now sad and despondent.

"Down with egoists," he groaned.

However, about three in the afternoon came a tap at the door.

"Ah! at last," cried Dard: "come in!"

The door was slowly opened, and two lovely faces appeared at the threshold. The demoiselles De Beaurepaire wore a tender look of interest and pity when they caught sight of

Dard, and on the old woman courtesying to them they courtesied to her and Dard. But when Dard put his arms on the chair to rise and salute them, Laure put up her finger and peremptorily forbade him. The next moment they were close to him, one a little to his right, the other to his left, and two pair of sapphire eyes with the mild lustre of sympathy playing down incessantly upon him. How was he? How had he slept? Was he in pain? Was he in much pain? tell the truth now. Was there anything to eat or drink he could fancy? Jacintha should make it and bring it, if it was within their means.

A prince could not have had more solicitous attendants; nor a fairy king lovelier and less earthly ones.

He looked in heavy amazement from one to the other. Laure laughed at him, then Josephine smiled. Laure bent, and was by some supple process on one knee, taking the measure of the wounded foot. When she first approached it he winced; but the next moment he smiled. He had never been touched like this, — it was contact and no contact, — she treated his foot as the zephyr the violets, — she handled it as if it had been some sacred thing. By the help of his eye he could just know she was touching him.

"There, monsieur, you are measured for a list shoe."

"And I will make it for you, Dard," said Josephine.

"Don't you believe her, Dard: I shall make it: she is indolent."

"We will both make it, then," said Josephine.

Dard grinned an uncertain grin.

At the door they turned and sent back each a smile brimful of comfort, promise, and kindness, to stay with him till next visit.

Dard scratched his head.

Dard pondered half an hour in silence thus, or thereabouts.

The old woman had been to milk the cow.

She now came into the kitchen.

Dard sang out lustily to her: "Granny, I'm better. Keep your heart up, old lady: we sha'n't die this bout. I am good for a few more little odd jobs," said he, with a sudden tincture of bitterness.

Presently in came Jacintha with a basket, crying, "I have not a minute to stay now: Dard, my young ladies have sent you two bottles of Burgundy, — you won't like that, — and here is a loaf I have just made. And now I must go": and she stayed three quarters of an hour with him, and cheered him mightily.

At dusk Riviere rode by, fastened his horse up, and came bustling in.

"How do we get on, dame?"

"Pretty well, monsieur. He was very dull at first, but now he is brightened up a bit, poor thing. All the great folks come here to see him, — the demoiselles De Beaurepaire and all."

"Ah! that is like them."

"O, as to that, my little son is respected far and wide," said the old lady, inflating herself; and as gratitude cannot live an instant with conceit, she went on to say, "and after all it is the least they can do, for he has been a good friend to them, and never seen the color of their money. Also! behold him hashed in their service, — a wounded foot, — that is all ever he took out of Beaurepaire."

"Hold your tongue," cried Dard, brutally; "if I don't complain, what right have you?" He added doggedly, but rather gently, "the axe was in my hand, not in theirs, — let us be just before all things."

The statesman sat at breakfast, eating roasted kidneys with a little melted butter and parsley under them, and drinking a tumbler of old Medoc slightly diluted, — a modest repast becoming his age, and the state of his affections. On his writing-table lay waiting for him a battle array of stubborn figures. He looked at them over his tumbler. "Ah!" thought he, "to-day I must be all the state's.

Even you must not keep me from those dry calculations, O well-beloved chateau of Beau-re-pai— ah! my telescope — it is! — it is." [*Exit statesman.*

The white flag was waving from the battlements.

When he got half-way to Beaurepaire, he found to his horror he had forgotten that wretched clout. However, he would not go back. He trusted to Jacintha's intelligence. It did not deceive him. He found her waiting for him.

"She is gone alone to Dard's house. The other will be after her soon, — forward!!"

He flew; he knocked with beating heart at Dard's door. At another time he should have knocked and opened without further invitation.

"Come in," cried Dard's stentorian voice. He entered, and there seated on a chair, with a book in her hand, was — Mademoiselle Josephine de Beaurepaire.

Riviere stared, — stupefied, mystified.

The young lady rose with a smile, courtesied, and reseated herself. She was as self-possessed as he was flurried and puzzled what to say or do. He recovered himself a little, inquired with wonderful solicitude Dard's present symptoms, and, suddenly remembering the other lady was expected, he said: "I leave you in good hands; angel visitors are best enjoyed alone," and retired slowly, with a deep obeisance. Once outside the door, dignity vanished in alacrity; he flew off into the park, and ran as hard as he could towards the chateau. He was within fifty yards of the little gate, when sure enough Laure emerged. They met; his heart beating violently.

"Ah! mademoiselle! —"

"Ah! it is Monsieur Riviere, I declare," said Laure, coolly, all over blushes, though.

"Yes, mademoiselle, and I am so out of breath. I am sent for you. Mademoiselle Josephine awaits you at Dard's house."

"She sent you for me?" inquired Laure, arching her brows.

"Not positively, Mademoiselle Laure."

"How pat he has our names too!"

"But I could see I should please her by coming for you; there is, I believe, a bull or so about."

"A bull or two; don't talk in that reckless way, monsieur. She has done well to send you; let us make haste."

"But I am a little out of breath."

"O never mind that! I abhor bulls."

"But, mademoiselle, we are not come to them yet, and the faster we go now the sooner we shall."

"Yes; but I always like to get a disagreeable thing over as soon as possible," said Laure, slyly.

"Ah," replied Edouard, mournfully, "in that case let us make haste."

After a little spurt, mademoiselle relaxed the pace of her own accord, and even went slower than before. There was an awkward silence. Edouard eyed the park boundary, and thought: "Now what I have to say I must say before we get to you"; and, being thus impressed with the necessity of immediate action, he turned to lead.

Laure eyed him from under her long lashes, and the ground, alternately.

At last he began to color and flutter. She saw something was coming, and all the woman donned defensive armor.

"Mademoiselle."

"Monsieur."

"Is it quite decided that your family refuse my acquaintance, my services, which I still—forgive me—press on you? Ah! Mademoiselle Laure, am I never to have the happiness of—of —even speaking to you?"

"It appears so," said Laure, dryly.

"Have you then decided against me, too? That happy day it was only mademoiselle who crushed my hopes."

"I?" asked Laure; "what have I to do with it?"

"Can you ask? Do you not see that it is not Mademoiselle Josephine, but you I— What am I saying? but, alas! you understand too well."

"No, monsieur," said Laure, with a puzzled air, "I do not understand. Not one word of all you are saying do I comprehend. I am sure it is Josephine and not me; for I am only a child."

"You a child! an angel like you?"

"Ask any of them," said she, pouting; "they will tell you I am a child; and it is to that I owe this conversation, no doubt; if you did not look on me as a child, you would not dare take this liberty with me," said the young cat, scratching without a moment's notice.

"Ah, mademoiselle, do not be angry. I was wrong"

"O, never mind. Children are little creatures without reserve, and treated accordingly, and to notice them is to honor them."

"Adieu then, mademoiselle. Try to believe no one respects you more than I do."

"Yes, let us part, for there is Dard's house; and I begin to suspect that Josephine never sent you."

"I confess it."

"There, he confesses it. I thought so all along!! What a dupe I have been!!"

"I will offend no more," said Riviere, humbly.

"We shall see."

"Adieu, mademoiselle. God bless you! May you find friends as sincere as I am, and more to your taste!"

"Heaven hear your prayers!" replied the malicious thing, casting up her eyes with a mock-tragic air.

Edouard sighed; a chill conviction that she was both heartless and empty fell on him. He turned away without another word. She called to him with a sudden airy cheerfulness that made him start.

"Stay, monsieur, I forgot, — I have something to tell you."

He returned, all curiosity.

"And a favor to ask you."

"Ah. Speak, mademoiselle!"

"You have made a conquest."

"I have a difficulty in believing you, mademoiselle."

"O, it is not a lady," said little Malice.

"Ah! then it is possible," was the bitter reply.

"Something better, — less terrestrial, you know, it is a *savant*. You jumped, you spoke, you conquered Doctor St. Aubin, that day. What do you think he says?"

"I have no idea."

"He says you are handsome" (opening her eyes to the full height of astonishment). "He says you are graceful; and, indeed, it was not a bad jump, I have been looking at it since; and, O Monsieur Riviere, he says you are modest!!!!!!!"

"Did he say all this before you?"

"Yes."

"Heaven reward him!"

"You agree with me that it was odd he should have ventured on these statements before me; but these *savans* can face any amount of contradiction."

"You did me the honor to contradict all this?"

"I did not fail."

"Thank you, mademoiselle."

"That is right, be unjust. No, monsieur; to detract from undeniable merit was not my real object; but not being quite such a child as some people think, I contradicted him, in order to — to — confirm him in those good sentiments; and I succeeded; the proof is that the doctor desires your acquaintance, monsieur; and now I come to the favor I have to ask you."

"Ah, yes, — the favor."

"Be so kind as to bestow your acquaintance on Monsieur St. Aubin," said Laure, her manner changing from sauciness to the timidity of a person asking a favor. "He will not discredit my recommendation. Above all, he will not make difficulties, as

we ladies do, for he is really worth knowing. In short, believe me, it will be an excellent acquaintance for you — and for him," added she, with all the grace of the De Beaurepaires. "What say you, monsieur?"

Riviere was mortified to the heart's core. "She refuses to know me herself," thought he, "but she will use my love to make me amuse that old man." His heart swelled against her injustice and ingratitude, and his crushed vanity turned to strychnine.

"Mademoiselle," said he, bitterly and doggedly, but sadly, "were I so happy as to have your esteem, my heart would overflow, not only on the doctor, but on every honest person around. But if I must not have the acquaintance I value more than life, suffer me to be alone in the world, and never to say a word either to Doctor St. Aubin or to any human creature, if I can help it."

The imperious young beauty drew herself up.

"So be it, monsieur; you teach me how a child should be answered that forgets herself, and asks — *Dieu!* — asks a favor of a stranger, — a perfect stranger," added she, with a world of small ill-nature.

Could one of the dog-days change to midwinter in a second, it would hardly seem so cold and cross as Laure de Beaurepaire turned from the smiling, saucy fairy of the moment before.

Edouard felt a portcullis of ice come down between her and him.

She courtesied and glided away. He bowed and stood frozen to the spot.

He felt so lonely and so bitter, he must go to Jacintha for something to lean on and scold.

He put his handkerchief up in the tree, and out came Jacintha, curious.

"You left the clout at home, I bet — what a head! — well, well, tell us."

"A fine blunder you made, Jacintha. It was Mademoiselle Josephine at Dard's."

"Do you call that a blunder, — ingrate?"

"Yes! Why, it is not Josephine I love."

"Yes, it is," replied Jacintha.

"No! no!"

"Change of wind then since yesterday!"

"No! no! How can you be so stupid, — fancy not seeing it is Mademoiselle Laure."

"Laure! that child?"

"She is not a child; she is quite the reverse. Don't call her a child, — she objects to it, — it puts her in a passion."

"You have deceived me," said Jacintha, severely.

"Never!"

"You have. You never breathed Laure's name to me."

"No more I did Josephine's."

"Did n't you? Are you sure? Well, if you did not, what has that to do with it? You pretended to be in love with my young lady."

"No! with one of them, I said."

"Well! and how was I to guess by that it was Laure?"

"And how were you to guess it was Josephine?"

"There was no guessing in the case; if it was not Josephine, anybody with sense would have told a body it was Laure; but you are mad. Besides, who would look at Laure when Josephine was by? Mademoiselle Laure is very well; she has a pretty little face enough, but she is not a patch upon mademoiselle."

"Why, Jacintha, you are blind. But this is the way; you women are no judges of female beauty. They are both lovely, but Laure is the brightest, the gayest — O, her smile! It seems brighter than ever now; for I have seen her frown, Jacintha; think of that and pity me. I have seen her frown."

"And if you look this way you may see me frown."

"Why, what is the matter with you?"

"The matter is, that I wash my hands of the whole affair, it is infamous."

Jacintha then let him know, in her own language, that such frightful irregularities as this could not pass in an ancient family, where precedent and decorum reigned, and had for centuries. "The elder daughter must be got off our hands first; then let the younger take her turn." To gild the pill of decorum, she returned to her original argument. "Be more reasonable, my son, above all, less blind. She is nice, she is frisky; but she is not like Josephine, the belle of belles."

Edouard, in reply, anxious to conciliate his only friend, affected to concede the palm of beauty to the elder sister, but he suggested that Laure was quite beautiful enough for ordinary purposes, — such as to be fallen in love with, — nearer his own age, too, than Josephine. He was proceeding adroitly to suggest that he stood hardly high enough in France to pretend to the heiress of Beaurepaire, and must not look above the younger branch of that ancient tree, when Jacintha, who had not listened to a word he was saying, but had got over her surprise, and was now converted to his side by her own reflections, interrupted him.

"And therefore, yes," said this vacillating personage, carrying out an internal chain of reasons. "Next, I could not promise you Josephine, but Laure you shall have if you can be content with her."

The boy threw his arms round her neck.

"Quite content with Laure," said he, — "quite content, you dear Jacintha." Then his countenance fell.

"I forgot," said he; "in the heat of discussion one forgets so."

"Forgot what?" cried Jacintha, in some alarm.

"I have just lost her forever."

Jacintha put her hands on her hips, knuckles downwards.

"Now then," said she, with something between a groan and a grin, "what have you been at?"

He related his interview, all but the last passage.

Jacintha congratulated him.

"Why, it goes swimmingly. You are very lucky. I wonder she spoke to you at all out there all alone. In Dard's cottage I knew she would, because she could not help. Well."

Then he told her Laure's parting request.

"I say, mademoiselle," cried Jacintha, "you are coming on pretty well for a novice. There is one that has a head. You thanked and blessed her, &c."

"No, indeed, I did not. I declined — oh! very respectfully."

"Very respectfully!" repeated Jacintha, with disdain. "You really are not safe to go alone. Nevertheless, I can't be always at his elbow. Do you know what you have done?"

"No."

"You have made her hate you, that is all."

Riviere defended himself.

"It was so unjust to refuse me her acquaintance, and then ask me to amuse that ancient personage."

Jacintha looked him in the face, sneering like a fiend.

"Listen to a parable, Monsieur the Blind," said she. "Once there was a little boy madly in love with raspberry jam."

"A thing I hate."

"It is false, monsieur; one does not hate raspberry jam. He came to the store closet, where he knew there were a score jars of it, and — oh! misery — the door was locked. He kicked the door, and wept bitterly."

"Poor child, his grief affects me."

"Naturally, monsieur, — a fellow-feeling. His mamma came and said, 'Here is the key,' and gave him the key. And what did he do? Why, he fell to crying and roaring, and kicking the door. 'I don't wa-wa-wa-wa-nt the key-ey-ey. I wa-a-ant the jam, — oh! oh! oh! oh!'" and Jacintha mimicked to the life the mingled grief and ire of infancy debarred its jam.

Edouard wore a puzzled air, but it

was only for a moment; the next he hid his face in his hands, and cried: —

"Fool! fool! fool!"

"I shall not contradict you," said his Mentor, with affected politeness.

"She was my best friend."

"Who doubts it?"

"Once acquainted with the doctor, I could visit at Beaurepaire."

"*Parbleu!*"

"She had thought of a way to reconcile my wishes with this terrible etiquette that reigns here."

"She thinks to more purpose than you do, — that much is clear."

"Nothing is left now but to ask her pardon, — and to consent, — I am off."

"No, you are not," and Jacintha laid a grasp of iron on him. "Will you be quiet? — is not one blunder a day enough? If you go near her now, she will affront you, and order the doctor not to speak to you."

"O Jacintha! your sex then are fiends of malice?"

"While it lasts. Luckily with us nothing does last very long. Take your orders from me."

"Yes, general," said the young man, touching his hat.

"Don't go near her till you have made the doctor's acquaintance; that is easily done. He walks two hours on the east road every day, with his feet in the puddles and his head in the clouds."

"But how am I to get him out of the clouds?"

"With the first black beetle you meet."

"A black beetle!"

"Ay! catch her when you can. Have her ready for use in your handkerchief: pull a long face: and says you, 'Excuse me, monsieur, I have the misfortune not to know the Greek name of this merchandise here.' Say that, and behold him launched. He will christen the beast in Hebrew and Latin as well as Greek, and tell you her history down from the flood: next he will beg her of you, and out will come a cork and a pin, and behold the creature impaled. Thus it is that man loves beetles. He has a thousand pinned down at home, — beetles, butterflies, and so forth. When I go near the lot with my duster he trembles like an aspen. I pretend to be going to clean them, but it is to see the face he makes, for even a domestic requires to laugh: but I never do clean them, for after all he is more stupid than wicked, poor man! I have not therefore the sad courage to annihilate him."

"Let us return to our beetle, — what will his tirades about the antiquity of the beetle advance me?"

"Wretch! one begins about a beetle, but one ends Heaven knows where." She turned suddenly grave. "All this does not prevent my pot from being on the fire"; and, her heart of hearts being now in the kitchen, Riviere saw it was useless to detain her body, so thanking her warmly made at once for the east road.

Sure enough he fell in with the doctor, but not being armed with an insect he had to take refuge in a vegetable, — the fallen elm. He told St. Aubin he had employed a person to keep his ears open, and, if anything transpired at either of the taverns, let him know.

"You have done well, monsieur," said the doctor; "when the wine goes in, the secrets ooze out."

The next time they met Riviere was furnished with an enormous chrysalis. He had found it in a hedge, and was struck with its singular size. He produced it and with modest diffidence and twinkling eye sought information.

The doctor's eye glittered.

"The death's head moth!" he cried with enthusiasm, — "the death's head moth! a great rarity in this district. Where found you this?"

Riviere undertook to show him the place.

It was half a league distant. Coming and going he had time to make friends with St. Aubin, and this was the easier that the old gentleman, who

was a physiognomist as well as ologist, had seen goodness and sensibility in Edouard's face.

At the end of the walk he begged the doctor to accept the chrysalis. The doctor coquetted.

"That would be a robbery. You take an interest in these things yourself, — at least I hope so!"

The young rogue confessed modestly to the sentiment of entomology, but "the government worked him so hard as to leave him no hopes of shining in so high a science," said he, sorrowfully.

The doctor pitied him. "A young man of your attainments and tastes to be debarred from the everlasting secrets of Nature, by the fleeting politics of the day, in which it happens so seldom that any great principle is evolved."

Riviere shrugged his shoulders. "Somebody must do the dirty work," said he, chuckling inwardly.

Brief: the chrysalis went to Beaurepaire in the pocket of a grateful man.

"O wise Jacintha!" said the lover, "I thought you were humbugging me, but his heart is in these things. We are a league nearer one another than yesterday."

The doctor related his conversation with young Riviere, on whom he pronounced high encomiums, levelling them at Laure the detractor from his merit, as if he was planting so many death-blows. Her saucy eyes sparkled with fun: you might have lighted a candle at one and exploded a mine at the other; but not a syllable did she utter.

The white flag waved from the battlements of Beaurepaire.

So (there 's a sentence for you, — there 's a ring, — there 's earthly thunder!) the statesman dropped his statistics, and took up his hat and fled.

"Only to tell you you are in high favor, and I think you might risk a call," said Jacintha.

"What, on the baroness?"

"Why not? We shall be obliged to let her have a finger in the pie, soon or late."

"But I called on her, and was repulsed with scorn."

"Ha! ha! I remember you came to offer us your highness's patronage! Well, now I will tell you a better game to play at Beaurepaire than that. Think of some favor to ask us: come with your hat off. We like to grant favors: we are used to that. We don't know how to receive them."

"But what favor can I ask?"

"Oh! anything; so that you can make it sound a favor."

"I have it; I will ask leave to shoot over Beaurepaire."

"Good: and that will be an excuse for giving me some more birds," said she, who had always an eye to the pot. "Come, — forward."

"What, now? this very moment? — I was not prepared for this. My heart beats at the idea."

"Fiddle-de-dee! The baroness and the doctor are on the south terrace. But I am not to know that. I shall show you up to the baroness, and she won't be there, — you understand. Run to the front door; I 'll step round and let you in."

CHAPTER XI.

"Madame the baroness, here is a — young monsieur with a request — come in, monsieur. But, mademoiselle, where is madame the baroness?"

"My mother is on the terrace, Jacintha," said Josephine.

"I will seek her; be seated, monsieur."

Edouard began to stammer apologies.

"Such a trifle to trouble the baroness with, — and you, mesdemoiselles."

"You do not trouble us, monsieur," said Laure; "you see we go on working as if nothing had happened."

"That is flattering, Mademoiselle Laure."

"But we flutter," murmured Josephine, too low for Riviere to hear; then, when the kindly beauty had softened down her sister's piquancy, she said aloud: —

"Well, monsieur, I think I can answer for our mother that she will not refuse one whom we must always look on as — our friend."

"But not your acquaintance," said Edouard, tenderly, though reproachfully.

"Monsieur then cannot forgive us a repulse that cost us as much as it could him."

Here was an unexpected turn. Josephine's soft eyes and deprecatory voice seemed to imply that she might be won to retract a repulse for which she went so near apologizing.

"Jacintha is right," thought he, "she is the belle of belles."

"Ah! mademoiselle," said he, warmly, "how good you are to speak so to me!"

The door opened, and the baroness came in alone.

Edouard rose and bowed. The baroness courtesied, gravely waved him to a seat, and sat down herself.

"They tell me, monsieur, I have it in my power to be of some slight service to you, — all the better."

"Yes, madame; but it is a trifle, and I am in consternation to think I should have deranged you."

"Nowise, monsieur; I was about to come in when Jacintha informed me of the honor you had done me. Then monsieur wishes — "

"Madame, I am a sportsman. I am a neighbor of yours, madame, though I have not the honor to be known to you."

"That arises doubtless from this, monsieur, that I so seldom go into the world," said the lady, with polished insincerity.

"Well, madame, I am a sportsman, and shoot in your neighborhood, and the birds fly over into your ground. Now, madame, if I might follow them, I should often have a good day's sport."

"Monsieur," said the old lady, with a faint smile, "follow those birds wherever I have a right to invite you. I must at the same time inform you that since France was reformed, or, as some think, deformed, it has not been the custom to give the lady of Beaurepaire any voice in matters of this kind."

"Madame," said Edouard, "permit me to separate myself in your judgment from those persons."

"Monsieur has done that already." said the baroness, with all the grace of the old *régime*.

Riviere bowed low. His head being down, he cast a furtive glance, and there was Josephine working with that conscious complacency young ladies mildly beam with when they are working and interested in a conversation. Laure, too, was working, but her head was turned away, and she was bursting with suppressed merriment. He felt uneasy, — "It is me she is quizzing," — and yet he had a nervous desire to laugh with her; so he turned away hastily.

"Monsieur," said the baroness, languidly, "may I, without indiscretion, ask, does it afford you much pleasure to kill these birds?"

"Not too much, madame, to tell the truth, — but pursuit of anything is very inviting to our nature."

"Ah!" said Laure, dryly, off her guard.

"Did you speak, my daughter?" said the baroness, coldly.

"No, my mother," said Laure, a little frightened; with all her sauce she dare no more put in her word, uninvited, between her mother and a stranger, than she dare jump out of the window.

"Besides," continued Riviere, "when a man is very hard worked, these relaxations — "

"Ah! monsieur is hard worked!" said the baroness; her eye dwelling with a delicate irony on his rosy face.

He did not perceive it: it was too subtle. He answered with a shade of pomp: —

"Like all who serve the state."

"Ah! monsieur — serves — the — state." She seemed to congeal word by word. The young ladies exchanged looks of dismay.

"I serve France," said Riviere, gently; and something in his manner and in his youth half disarmed the old lady; but not quite: she said as she rose to conclude the interview: —

"Well, monsieur, (ah! you will forgive me if I cannot prevail on myself to call you citizen,") — this with ironical courtesy.

"Call me what you please, madame, except your enemy."

And he said this with so much feeling, and this submission of the conquering to the conquered party was so graceful, that the water came into Josephine's eyes, and Laure's bosom rose and fell, and her needle went slower and slower.

"Citizens have done me too much ill," explained the baroness, with a sombre look.

"Mamma," said Josephine, imploringly.

"They could not have known you, madame," said Edouard, "as I, even in this short interview — forgive my presumption — seem to do"; and he looked beseechingly at her.

"At least, monsieur," cried the old lady, kindly, and almost gayly, "it is a good beginning, I think." She courtesied, and that meant "go." He bowed to her and the young ladies, and retired demurely: one twinkle of triumph shot out of his eye towards Laure.

The baroness turned to her daughters.

"Have you any idea who is this little Republican who has invented the idea of asking permission to shoot the partridges of another, and who, be it said, in passing, has the face of an angel?"

They looked at one another. Laure spoke:—

"Yes, mamma, we have an idea — well, he is, you know — the purse."

The baroness flushed.

"Ah! And why did you not tell me, children?"

"O mamma, it would have been so awkward for you, we thought."

"You are very considerate."

"And we must have whispered it, and that is so ill-bred."

"More so than to giggle when I receive a visitor?" asked the baroness, keenly.

"No, mamma," said Laure, humbly, and the next moment she colored all of a sudden, and the next moment after she looked at her mother, and her eyes began to fill.

"Let us compound, mademoiselle," said the baroness. "Instead of crying, because your old mother speaks more sharply than she means, which would be absurd at your age, you shall tell me why you laughed."

"Agreed, mamma," cried Mademoiselle April, vulgarly called Laure; "then because — he! he! — he has been shooting over your ground for two months past without leave."

"Oh! impossible."

"I have heard the guns, and seen him and Dard doing it. And now he has come to ask for leave with the face of an angel, as you remarked — he! he! — and oh! mamma, you complimented him — he! — and he absorbed the praise with such an ingenuous gravity, — ha! ha! ha! After all it is but reversing the period at which such applications are made by ordinary sportsmen, — after instead of before. What does that matter? — time flies so, — ha! ha! ha! ha! ha!"

"Humph!" said the baroness, and seemed very thoughtful, and mighty little amused.

Edouard went home exulting: he had inserted the wedge.

He little thought that Mademoiselle April had sacrificed him to a laugh, still less that a council of war had been convened and was even now sitting on him. Had he known this, the deluded youth that went along exulting would have gone trembling, and there he would have been mis-

taken again. Yet there are two hundred thousand people that believe a gypsy girl can predict the future.

She cannot, — the wisest of us cannot, — angels cannot, — Satan cannot, though fifty thousand of my Yankee friends have assumed as a self-evident proposition that he can.

The baroness sent for St. Aubin to ask his advice as to the best way of keeping the citizen at a distance.

The doctor listened with great interest, and often smiled as the baroness put her portions of the puzzle to his portions of it, and the whole enigma lay revealed.

"Aha!" said he, at last, "the young rogue has taken me by my foible; but I will be revenged."

"The question is not your revenge, but what *I* am to do."

"Ah!" said the doctor, "you require my advice what you should do?"

"Certainly I do."

"Humph!" said the doctor, and reflected profoundly: "then my advice is, — let them alone."

"Let them alone," replied the baroness, sharply, — "that is easily said."

"It is as easily done," replied he, quietly.

The baroness stared, and a faint flush rose in her delicate cheek, at her friend's cool way of disposing of a question that so embarrassed her.

"TRUST TO NATURE!" said the doctor, benignantly.

"TRUST TO NATURE!" screamed the old aristocrat, with horror and dismay in her face,—"is the man mad?"

"No, madame; nor is Nature: trust to her. She will bring the young lady and the young citizen together quite quickly enough without our inflaming them by opposition."

"You make me regret, sir, that I disturbed your graver studies for a matter so little serious as this," was the bitter answer veiled in tones of perfect politeness.

"My friend, if you wished for the sort of advice that political prejudice or other blinding influence gives, I was indeed the wrong person to send for."

"But," continued the lady, haughtily, not deigning to notice his last sentence, "you will make my apologies to the spiders, to whom and their works you are, I conclude, about to return."

The doctor rose at this piece of polite insolence.

"Since you permit me, madame. I shall find Nature in spiders, and admire her: but not more than I do in the young lady and the young citizen who are now submitting to her sweetest law."

"Enough! monsieur, — enough!"

"As I myself in former times, when youth — "

"As that must be very long ago, and as among the results marriage has not been one, perhaps it would be as well to spare me the recital," said the baroness, too spiteful to let slip this chance of a slap, fair or unfair.

"True, madame. Well, then, let us take an unimpeachable example, — as yourself, — who have been married, — in your younger days, — not deeming the birds in spring unworthy imitation — deigned — "

"Monsieur, our conference is ended."

The doctor went off with a malicious grin; much he cared for his old friend's grand airs and biting tongue. The only creature he stood in awe of was Jacintha.

"O that duster!"

"What is the hardest substance on earth?"

"Adamant, stupid."

"No."

"Well, then, steel?"

"No."

"Platinum?"

"No. Do you give it up? — do you? — do you? — do you? — ice."

"Ice?"

"Moral ice, not physical, — not solidified water, but solidified cti-

quette, — congealed essence of grandmamma, — custom, ceremony, propriety when down at 32 Fahrenheit.

"How many have jumped as high as they could, and come down as hard as they could, on purpose to break this ice, — and been broken? You can try it, mesdames, but not by my advice.

"By a just balance of qualities, this ice, once broken, is the hardest thing in the world to mend.

"Human ice, once liquefied, cannot be congealed back to its original smoothness, strength, and slipperiness.

"Nature glides in and unrecognized, unthanked, keeps the thawed from freezing again, the frozen from petrifying."

When the ladies of Beaurepaire darted from their family oak, and caught Riviere in his felonious act, they broke the ice.

Josephine's attempt to repair it on the spot was laudable but useless.

It was not in nature that this young man and these two young women could ever be again the strangers they were before.

Whenever they met in the park, he had always a word ready, and they answered. It was but a sly word or two; but these words were like little sticks judiciously inserted as a fire burns up.

Factotum Dard co-operated.

So powerful was Factotum's destiny, that even when he was laid up in his arm-chair another little odd job fell upon him; he became a go-between, though unable to stir.

Lovers met — to nurse him.

First would come the two ladies, or sometimes only Laure, and curious enough in less than ten minutes Edouard was sure to arrive, very hot; it happened so, — how, I have no idea; indeed it would be idle to attempt to account for all the strange coincidences that occur. Let me rather mention here, apologizing for its complete irrelevance, that the young man had been much puzzled what to do with the twenty pieces of gold.

"They are sacred," said he.

But eventually he laid them out, and ten more, in a new telescope with an immensely powerful lens.

Science, by its mouthpiece St Aubin, highly approved the purchase, and argued great things for a young man who turned his lodgings into an observatory.

"Also a politician who looks heavenwards is not of every-day occurrence," said the dry doctor.

One day that both young ladies and Riviere met round black-foot* Dard, that worthy, who had hitherto signalized himself by the depth of his silent reflections, and by listening intently to good books as read by Josephine, and by swearing at his toe, rather than by any prolonged conversational efforts, suddenly announced his desire to put a few queries.

The auditory prepared to sustain the shock of them.

"It is about the lives of the suffering saints I have been reading to console him," thought Josephine.

"What I want to know is, how it happens that you aristocrats come to see me so often?"

"O Dard," said Josephine, "don't you know?"

"No! I don't."

"Don't you see it is the least we can do: only think of the number of little odd jobs you have done for us."

"O, as to that, yes, I have, by St. Denis I have."

"I have myself seen you work in the garden, drive the cow, chop wood, alas! poor lad, once too often, and take fish for us out of the pond, and — "

"Stop, mademoiselle, it is no use your trying to count them, Heaven has given no man fingers enough to count my little odd jobs, much less a woman," added he, getting confused between the jobs and the fingers.

* A Scotch word for a go-between: excuse the heartless pun.

"Well, then, you see you agree with us. You have every claim on our gratitude."

"O, then, it is the jobs I did up at Beaurepaire that gain me these visits."

"Yes! but above all the good heart that prompted them."

Dard was silent a moment: then suddenly bursting out into an off-hand, reckless, jaunty tone: "Oh! as to that," said he, "I am not one of your fellows that are afraid of work. A few little jobs more or less make no difference to me. 'Too much of one thing is good for nothing,' as the saying goes, — and 'changes are lightsome.'" His next observation betrayed more candor than tact. "It was to please Jacintha I did them, not out of regard for you, though."

"What have we to do with that?" said Laure, sharply: "we benefited by them: and now you shall benefit by them. Ah, Dard! if we were but a little richer, we would make you so comfortable."

"I wish you were the richest citizens in France," said he, bluntly.

Edouard walked to the gate of the Pleasance with the ladies, and talked nineteen to the dozen, to leave no room for them to say Adieu and so get rid of him. They did not hate him for not giving them that chance.

He gave the ice no time to freeze again.

And all this time he was making friends with Doctor St. Aubin; and as things will turn in this world, or rather twist, the way least expected, he got to like the doctor and greatly to admire him. He was a mine of knowledge, and his tastes were almost as wide as his information. He relished Nature more perhaps than anything else; but he was equally ready with poetry, with history, and, what charmed young Edouard, with politics of the highest order.

In their graver converse he made the young man see how great and rare a thing is a statesman, how common and small a thing is a placeman. He poured examples drawn from many nations and many epochs, and sounded trumpet notes of great state policy, and the patriotism it is founded on; and on these occasions he would rise into real eloquence, and fire the young heart of Citizen Riviere.

In short they became friends, and Riviere no sooner felt they were friends than his conscience smote him, and he said to himself: "I will tell him all: hs is a good man, — a wise man, — a just man. I'm not ashamed of my love. I will entreat him to be on my side."

"My friend," he began, "I have a confession to make."

He looked at his friend: the doctor twinkled from head to foot.

"Perhaps it will not take you altogether by surprise."

"We shall see."

Then Edouard told his story as people tell their own stories. How he had come to this district a stanch Republican. How he had seen two young ladies walking so calm, gentle, and sad, always in black. How their beauty and grace had made them interesting, but their misfortunes had made them sacred. How after many meetings a new feature had arisen in their interconrse; Mademoiselle Laure had smiled on him,-as earth, he thought, had never smiled before. (The doctor grinned here, as many an old fellow has grinned on like occasion, mindful of the days when he was a young fool and did not know it; and now he is an old one, and does n't know it.) This had gone through his heart. Then, suppressing Jacintha, he told his friend he had learned from a sure source the family was in bitter poverty. The doctor sighed. The ardent desire to save them, coupled with the difficulty, and their inaccessibility, had almost driven him mad.

"I lost all my color," cried he, half angrily. Then he told the story of the purse, and how happy he had felt when he dropped it and stole away,

and happier when he heard it had been found, and how, after all, that attempt to save them had failed; "and now, monsieur," he said, "my heart often aches, and I burn and freeze by turns. I watch hours and hours for the chance of a word or a look. If I fail, I am miserable all that day; if I succeed, I am the happiest man in France for half an hour. Then I go back to my little room. It looks like a prison after that. The sun seems to have left the earth, and taken hope with him. O my friend, much as I love her, there are moments I wish I had never seen her. She I love will be my ruin. But I shall love her all the same; it is not her fault. I am in a fever night and day. My duties, once so pleasant, are tasteless now. Ah! monsieur, pity me and advise me!"

"I will; tell me first, are you conscious of a slight tremor on the skin when you wake in the morning?"

"No."

"Occasional twitches, mostly in the region of the thigh?"

"No! — yes! — how could you know that? but such trifles are not worth our attention."

"Diagnostics are not worth our attention!"

"No, no! it's my heart! — it's my heart!"

"My young friend," said the doctor, "you have done well to come to me. You must do one of two things: the choice I leave to you."

"Thank you, my friend!"

"You must either leave this district to-morrow —"

"I would rather leave the earth!"

"Or —"

"Ah! or —"

"You must go with me to the baroness, and, backed by me, ask leave to court her daughter openly like a man."

"Backed by you! am I so fortunate? are you on my side?"

"Firm as a rock!" shouted the doctor; "and what is more I have been your secret ally, a traitor in the camp Beaurepaire, this three weeks; also I have watched your little manœuvres with me, Citizen Cherubin, with no less interest and curiosity than I watch a young bird building its first nest, or a silkworm spinning her silk, or a spider her web, or any other cunning inspired by great Nature. O, you need not hide your head, fox with the face of the Madonna: I awaited this revelation from you; I knew it would come. I am glad it is come so soon; a want of candor is unmanly, and a great fault in youth; you shall now learn how wise it is to be candid. Now tell me, Edouard —"

"Ah! thank you, monsieur!"

"Your parents! — would they consent to a match between you and a young lady of rank, but no wealth?"

"Monsieur, I am not so fortunate as to have any parents, — unless you will let me look on you as one."

"This, dear child! — I consent, — my snuff-box, — good! left it at home."

"I have an uncle; but you know one is not bound to obey an uncle, except perhaps —"

"When his wishes are the echo of our own, — then we are."

"Besides, my uncle loves me, — at least, I think so."

"Oh! impossible. You must be mistaken."

"Monsieur is too good. I do not please all as I have, by good fortune, pleased you, my friend. But, in fact, my uncle has no aversion towards the aristocracy."

"All the better. Well, my young lover, I am satisfied. All the battle, then, will be at Beaurepaire. Have you courage?"

"I am full of it; only sometimes it is the courage of hope, sometimes of despair."

"Call on me to-morrow with the courage of hope."

"What, at the chateau!" cried the young man, all in a flutter.

"Ay, at the impregnable castle itself, where, preposterous as it may appear, the right of receiving my

visitors is conceded me. Were it not, I should take it."

"It does me good to hear a man talk so boldly about the chateau."

"I shall present you to my friend the baroness."

"O Heavens!"

"She will receive you as a glacier the Polar Star."

"I feel she will. I shiver in advance."

"And, deaf to me, your advocate, in other words, to reason and good sense personified, ahem! she will yield to you. My vanity will be shocked, and behold us enemies for life."

Riviere shook his head despondingly. "Deaf to you, yield to me, — how can this be?"

"Because she is the female of our species, — a thing to be persuaded, not convinced; trust to me, — have faith in Nature, — and come at twelve o'clock."

St. Aubin, on reaching the chateau, found the dun pony standing at the door. He hurried into the dining-room, and there were the notary and the young ladies, all apparently in good spirits. The notary had succeeded. He showed the doctor, as he had already showed the ladies, a penal contract by which Bonard bound himself not to sell the estate, or assign the loan, to any one.

The doctor was enchanted, shook the notary again and again by the hand, and took him up stairs to the baroness.

"There is no further necessity for concealment," said he, "and it would be most unjust not to give her an opportunity of thanking you."

The baroness looked rather cold and formal at sight of the notary, but her manner soon changed. Although the doctor underrated the danger the chateau had just escaped, yet at the bare mention she turned as pale as death; both her daughters and the doctor observed this.

"Strange," said she, "I had a presentiment."

When she found the danger was past, a deep sigh showed how the mere relation had taken away her breath.

"Heaven reward you, monsieur," cried she; "the last time you were here, you gave me advice which offended me, probably because it was wise advice. Accept my excuses."

"They are unnecessary, madame. I could not but respect your prejudices, though I suffered by them."

"In future, monsieur, count on more candor, and perhaps more humility; that is, should my impetuosity not deter you from ever wasting good advice on me again."

"On the contrary, madame, if you could give me an hour to-morrow, I should be glad to show you a means by which the estate and chateau can be placed above all risk, not only from a single creditor, but from the whole body, were they to act hostilely and in concert."

"Hear! hear!" cried the doctor.

"I shall be at your disposal."

"At this interview, I request that the heiress of Beaurepaire may be also present."

"What necessity for that?" inquired the baroness, sharply.

"O," said the doctor, "I understand; the next heir's formal consent is required to arrangements made for the benefit of the life-holder. Am I mad? to talk of the next heir. Why, Josephine is the present proprietor."

"I!" cried Josephine, with astonishment, not unmixed with horror.

The notary's lip curled with contempt at the little party that had not even asked themselves to whom the property belonged.

"Mademoiselle de Beaurepaire will be present," said the baroness.

A little before twelve o'clock, Edouard Riviere stood at the door, with something like an ice javelin running the length of his backbone. The baroness was in his eyes the most awful human creature going. He would have feared an interview with

the First Consul one shade less, or half a shade.

Jacintha, smiling and winking, showed him into St. Aubin's study. The doctor received him warmly, and, after a few words of kind encouragement, committed him to the beetles, while he went to intercede with the baroness.

The baroness stopped him cunningly at the first word.

"Ah! my good doctor, spare me this topic for once. The most disagreeable draught ceases to be poignant when administered every day for three weeks."

"If you and I only were concerned in it, I would prescribe it no longer, but those we love are deeply interested in it."

"Josephine, my daughter," cried the baroness, "are you deeply interested in marrying Citizen Riviere, — with a face like a girl?"

"No! mamma!"

"We must not ask Laure, I think, — she is rather too young for such topics."

"Not a bit too young, mamma, if you please; but I lack the inclination."

"In short, somehow or another, you can both dispense with the doctor's friend for a husband. Let him go then. Now, if the doctor had proposed himself, we should all three be pulling caps for him."

A little peal of laughter, like as of silver bells, rang out at the doctor's expense.

He never moved a muscle.

"Permit me to recall to you the general substance of the reasons I have urged for admitting the visits of my friend Monsieur Edouard Riviere at this house."

"A sort of *précis*, or recapitulation," remarked the baroness, dryly.

"Exactly."

"Such as precedes the final dismissal of an exhausted subject."

"Or makes the intelligent hearer at last comprehend and retain it.

"First, and above all, this young man is good and virtuous; then he loves with delicacy, — with rare delicacy; am I right, mesdemoiselles? Well — I await your answer — Cowards!! — and with ardor. He burns to do good to you all. Now, let us soberly inquire, is the family in a position to scorn such a godsend? Some fine day, when the chateau is sold over our heads, shall we not feel too late that imprudence is guilt in those who have the charge of beloved ones as well as of themselves. Look facts in the face, madame; comprehend to-day what all the rest of France has long comprehended, that the Bourbons are snuffed out. They were little men, whom accident placed high, and accident could lay low. This Bonaparte's finger is thicker than their loins. Well, if you can really doubt this, lean on your rotten reeds; but not with all your weight; marry one daughter to a Royalist, but one into the rising dynasty; then we shall be safe, come what may, and this ancient but tottering house will not fall in our day, or by any fault of ours."

"This may be prudence," said the baroness. "I think it is; but it is prudence so hard, worldly, and cynical, that, had I known it was coming, I think I should have sent that child out of the room."

Laure cast a look of defiance at Josephine for not being called a child and she was.

St. Aubin winced, but kept his temper.

"Show me, then," said he, "that you can rise to things less cynical and worldly than prudence. Look at the young man's virtue, — his character."

"What do we know of his character?"

"What do we know of his character? Are we blind, then, or can we see virtue only when it comes to us on paper? Is there nothing in our own souls that recognizes great virtues at sight, and cries, 'Hail! brother'?"

"Yes! yes! there is!" cried Laure, her eyes flaming.

"Be silent, my child."

"Needs there a long string of scribblers to tell us what actions are good and beautiful, and beyond the little vulgar and the great vulgar to do or to admire?

"What do you know of his character? You know that in a world which vaunts much and does nothing but egoism, sometimes bare egoism, sometimes gilt egoism, but always egoism, this poor boy has loved you all as angels love and as mortals don't, and like angels has done you good unseen. You know nothing? You know he is not rich, yet consecrated half his income to you, without hope even of thanks. Is it his fault he was found out? No! my young ladies there were too cunning for him, or you would never have known your angel friend. Read now those great Messieurs Corneille and Racine for a love so innocent, so delicate, so like a woman's, so like an angel's. Search their immortal pages for it, — and find it not.

"Are you deaf to sentiment, blind to beauty of person and the soul? Then be shrewd, be prudent, and be friends with the rising young citizen. I have measured him, — he is no dwarf. He was first at the *Ecole Politechnique*, — he won't be last in France. Are you too noble to be prudent? then be noble enough to hold out the hand to the noble and good and beautiful for their own sakes, unless, after twenty years' friendship, I am anything to you; in that case, O, welcome them for mine."

The baroness hung her head, but made no answer.

"My mother," said Josephine, imploringly, "the dear doctor is in earnest. I fear he may doubt our love for him if you refuse him. He never spoke so loud before. Mamma, dear mamma!"

"What is it you wish me to do, monsieur?"

"Only to receive my friend, and let him plead his own cause."

"I consent. I am like Josephine. I do not love to have an old friend bawling at me."

"Thank you, ladies, for your consideration for my feelings — and your ears."

"Where are you going?"

"To fetch him!"

"What, to-day?"

"This minute."

"My daughters, this was a trap. Where is he? In the Pleasance?" asked she, ironically, taking for granted he was much farther off.

"No; in my room: trembling at the ordeal before him."

"It is not too late to retreat; better so than give me the pain of dismissing him."

"In one minute he will be with you. Break his heart if you are quite sure there is any real necessity; but at least do it gently."

"That is understood. My child, take a turn on the terrace." Laure went out, after shaking her snowball at Josephine for being allowed to stay and she not.

"O my dear friend, what a surprise I have endured! what a time you have been!"

"I have had a tough battle."

"But you have won? your reasons have prevailed?"

"My reasons? — straws! One of them calls them so openly, I forget which. No! my reasons fell to the earth unheeded; did n't I tell you they would?"

"O Heaven!"

"But, luckily, in reasoning I shouted. Then that angel Josephine said, 'O my mother, we cannot refuse the doctor; he has shouted, — he who never shouts.' New definition of reason, — an affair of the lungs. Now go and show them your pretty face."

"Yes! O my friend, what shall I say? what shall I say?"

"What matters it what you say? Wisdom won't help you, folly won't hurt you; still, by way of being extremely cautious, I would n't utter too much good sense. Turn two be-

seeching eyes upon her; add the language of your face to the logic of my lungs, and win. Come."

"Madame, this is Monsieur Edouard Riviere, my friend."

A stately reverence from the baroness.

"May my esteem and his own merits procure him at your hands favorable treatment, and should you find him timid and flurried, and little able to address you fluently, allow, I pray you, for his youth, for the modesty that accompanies merit, and for the agitation of his heart at such a moment. I leave you."

Edouard, trembling and confused, stammered, scarcely above a whisper: —

"O madame, I feel I shall need all my friend's excuses"; and here his whisper died out altogether, and his tongue seemed to glue itself to something and lose the power of motion.

"Calm yourself, monsieur: I listen to you."

"Madame, I do not deserve her, — but I love her. My position is not what she merits, — but I love her."

"How can that be, monsieur? — you do not know her."

"Ah yes, madame! — I know her: there are souls that speak through the countenance: I have lived on hers too long not to know her. Say rather you do not know me, — you may well hesitate to allow one unknown to come near so great a treasure. There I am sure is the true obstacle. Well, madame, as my merits are small, let my request be moderate: give me a trial. Let me visit you, — I am not old enough to be a hypocrite: if I am undeserving, such an eye as yours will soon detect me: you will dismiss me, and I shall go at a word, for I am proud too, though I have so little to be proud of."

"You do not appear to see, monsieur, that this little experiment will compromise my daughter."

"Not at all, madame; I promise it shall not; I swear I will not presume on any opportunity your goodness shall give me. Consider, madame, it is only here that I can make you acquainted with my character: you never leave the chateau, madame: let me come to the chateau now and then, oh, pray let me come, madame the baroness!" and he turned his beseeching eyes on her.

"Was ever anything so unreasonable?"

"Ah! madame, the more I shall bless you if you will be so generous as not to refuse me."

"But if it is my duty to refuse you?"

"Then I shall die, madame, that is all."

"Childishness!"

"And you will be sorry."

"You think so!"

"O yes! for madame has a good heart, — only she cannot see, and will not believe, h-h-how I l-love."

"Child! now if you cry, I will send you away at once. One would say I am very cruel, but I am not, — I am only in my senses, and this child is not. In the first place, these things are not done in this way. The approaches are made, not by the young madman himself, but by his parents: these open the treaty with the parent or parents of the lady."

"But, madame, I am not so fortunate as to have a parent."

"What! no father?"

"No, madame. I cannot even remember my father."

"No mother?"

"Madame, she died five years ago. Mademoiselle Josephine can tell you what I lost that day. If she was alive she would be about your age. Ah, no, madame! you may be sure she is gone from me, or I should not kneel before you thus friendless. She would come to you and say, 'Madame, you are a mother as I am, — feel for me, — my son loves your daughter; he will die if you refuse him. Have pity on me and on my son. I know him, — he is not unworthy.' O Mademoiselle Jose-

phine, speak a word for me, I implore you; for me who, less happy than you, have no mother, — for me who speak so ill, and have so much need to speak well. I shall be rejected — by my own fault. Can one have so much to say and say so little? Can the heart be so full and the tongue so powerless? My mother, why did you leave me?"

The baroness rose.

She turned her head away.

Riviere awaited his doom trembling with agitation, and wishing he had said anything but what he had said; he saw, too, a little tremor pass over the baroness, but did not know how to interpret that.

"The emotion such words cause me — no, I cannot. My child, you shall leave me now. I will send you my answer by letter."

These last words were spoken in almost a coaxing tone, in a much kinder tone than she had ever used before, and Edouard's hopes rose.

"O yes, madame," said he, innocently, "I prefer it so; thank you, madame, from the bottom of my heart, thank you!"

He paused in the middle of his gratitude, for to his surprise the baroness's eyes suddenly became fixed with horror and astonishment. He wheeled round to see what direful object had so transfixed her, and caught Josephine behind him, but at some distance, looking at her mother with an imploring face, a face to melt a tigress, and both her white hands clasped together in mute supplication, and her cheeks wet.

When she saw herself detected, she attempted no further secrecy, but came forward, her hands still clasped.

"Ah, no, my mother!" Then she turned to Edouard. "Do you not see she is going to refuse you by letter because she has not the courage to look in your sweet face and strike you?"

"Ah, traitress! traitress!" shrieked the baroness.

Edouard sighed.

Josephine stood supplicating.

"A new light strikes me," cried the old lady: "what a horror! Why, Josephine, — my daughter, — is it possible you are interested — to such a degree — in this —"

Josephine lowered her lovely head.

"Yes, my mother," said she, just above a whisper.

The baroness groaned.

Edouard, to comfort her, began: —

"But, madame, it is not —"

"Ah! hold your tongue," cried Josephine, hastily, in an accent of terror.

The mystified one held his tongue.

"She is right, monsieur," said the baroness, dryly: "leave her alone, she will have more influence with me than you. In a word, monsieur, I am about to consult my daughter in this wise and well-ordered affair. Be pleased to excuse us a few minutes."

"Certainly, madame." He took his hat.

"I will send for you. Meantime go and play with that other child on the terrace," said she, spitefully; for all her short-lived feeling in his favor was gone now.

Monsieur Edouard bowed respectfully, and submitted demurely to his penance.

"All is ended," said the baroness; "the sentiments that have corrupted the nation have ended by penetrating into my family, — my eldest daughter flings herself at a man's head, — again it is not a man, but a boy, with the face of an angel."

Josephine glided to her mother's side, and sank on her knees.

"My mother, have some little confidence in your Josephine! Am I so very foolish? Am I so very wicked?" And she laid her cheek against her mother's.

The old lady kissed her.

"Thou shalt have him, — thou shalt have him! my well-beloved: have no fear: thy mother loves thee too well to vex thee." But at this the old lady began to sob and to cry: "They are taking away my children! they are taking away my children!" And to

the doctor, who came in full of curiosity, she cried out: "Ah! you are come, you! — enjoy then your triumph, for you have won!"

"All the better!" cried the doctor, gayly.

"Nevertheless, it was a sorry triumph to come to a poor old woman from whom they had taken all except her daughters, and to rob her of them, too, — ah!"

The doctor hung his head: then he stepped quickly up to her with great concern, and took her hand.

"My dear, dear friend," he cried, "the laws of Nature are inevitable. Sooner or later the young birds must leave the parent's nest."

"Nature is very cruel, — oh! oh!"

"She but seems so, because she is unchangeable. There is another law, to which you and I must both yield erelong."

"Yes, my friend."

"Shall we go, and leave these tender ones to choose mates and protectors for themselves, out of a world of wolves in sheep's clothing? Shall we refuse them, while we live, the light of our age and wisdom in this the act that is to color their whole lives?"

"You have always reason on your side, you. Well! send for the young man. He is good: he will forgive me if, in spite of myself, I should be sometimes rude to him: he will understand that to my daughter he is a lover, but to me a burglar, — a highway robber, — poor child! He is very handsome all the same. Next, he has no mother, — if I was not so wicked I should try and supply her place, — you see I am reasonable. Tell me now how long it will be before you come to me for *Laure?* O, do not be afraid: I will let her go too. I will not give all this trouble a second time, — the first struggle it is that tears us. Yet I knew it must come some day. But I did not expect it so soon. No matter — I will be reasonable — to-day is the fourth of November. I shall remember the fourth of November, — go to. All I ask is, when they are both gone, and the house is quite, quite desolate, then suffer me to die, — when all I love is gone from me. Oh! oh! oh! oh! oh!"

"Monsieur Perrin, the notary, is below and would speak to madame," said Jacintha, at the door.

"Ah! I remember, away with our tears, my friends: here comes one who would not understand them. He would say, 'What, have they all the toothache at once, in this house?'"

St. Aubin, after the first compliments, retired; and the notary, the baroness, and Josephine seated themselves in a triangle.

He began by confessing to them that he had not overcome the refractory creditor without much trouble; and that he had since learned there was another, a larger creditor, likely to press for payment or for sale of the estate. The baroness was greatly agitated by this communication: the notary remained cool as a cucumber, and keenly observant.

"Bonard," said he, "has put this into their heads; otherwise I believe they never would have thought of it."

He went on to say all this had caused him grave reflections.

"It seems," said he, with cool candor, "a sad pity that the estate should pass from a family that has held it since the days of Charlemagne."

"Now God forbid!" cried the baroness, lifting her eyes and her quivering hands to Heaven.

Now the notary held the Republican creed in all its branches.

"Providence, madame, does not interfere in matters of business," said he. "Nothing but money can save the estate. Let us then look at things solid. Has any means occurred to you of raising money to pay off these encumbrances?"

"No. What means can there be? The estate is mortgaged to its full value: so they all say."

"And they say true!" put in the notary, quickly.

"There is no hope."

"Do not distress yourself, madame: I am here!!"

"Ah, my good friend, may Heaven reward you."

"Madame, up to the present time I have no complaint to make of this same Heaven. By the by, permit me to show you that I am on the rise: here, mademoiselle, is a gimcrack they have given me"; and he unbuttoned his overcoat, and showed them a piece of tricolored ribbon and a clasp. "As for me, I look to the solid, I care little for these things," said he, secretly bursting with gratified vanity; "but the world is dazzled by them. However, I can show you something better." He took out a letter. "This is from the Minister of the Interior to a client of mine: it amounts to a promise I shall be the next prefect, and the present prefect — I am happy to say — is on his death-bed. Thus, madame, your humble servant in a few short months will be notary no longer, but prefect; I shall then sell my office of notary, — it is worth one hundred thousand francs, — and I flatter myself when I am a prefect you will not blush to own me."

"Then as now, monsieur," said the baroness, politely, "we shall recognize your merit. But — "

"I understand, madame: like me, you look to what is solid. Thus then it is: I have money."

"Ah! all the better for you."

"I have a good deal of money. But it is dispersed in a great many small, though profitable investments. Now to call it in suddenly would entail some loss."

"I do not doubt it."

"Never mind, madame, if you and my young lady there have ever so little of that friendly feeling towards me of which I have so much towards you, all my investments shall be called in. Six months will do it; two thirds of your creditors shall be paid off at once. A single party on whom I can depend, one of my clients, who dares not quarrel with me, will advance the remaining third; and so the estate will be safe. In another six months even that diminished debt shall be liquidated, and Beaurepaire chateau, park, estate, and grounds, down to the old oak-tree, shall be as free as air; and no power shall alienate them from you, mademoiselle, and from the heirs of your body."

The baroness clasped her hands in ecstasy.

"But what are we to do for this, monsieur?" inquired Josephine, calmly, "for it seems to me that it can only be effected by great sacrifices on your part."

"I thank you, mademoiselle, for your penetration in seeing that I must make sacrifices. I would never have told you, but you have seen it, — and I do not regret that you have seen it. Madame, mademoiselle, those sacrifices appear little to me, — will seem nothing, — will never be mentioned, or even alluded to, after this day, if you, on your part, will lay me under a far heavier obligation, — if in short," — here the contemner of things unsubstantial reopened his coat, and brought his ribbon to light again, — "if you, madame, WILL ACCEPT ME FOR YOUR SON-IN-LAW, — IF YOU, MADEMOISELLE, WILL TAKE ME FOR YOUR HUSBAND!"

The baroness and her daughter looked at one another in silence.

"Is it a jest?" inquired the former of the latter.

"Can you think so, my mother? Answer Monsieur Perrin. Above all, my mother, remember he has just done us a kind office."

"I shall remember it. Monsieur, permit me to regret that, having lately won our gratitude and esteem, you have taken this way of modifying those feelings. But after all," she added with gentle courtesy, "we may well put your good deeds against this — this error in judgment. The balance is in your favor still, provided you never return to this topic. Come, is it agreed?"

The baroness's manner was full of tact, and the latter sentences were said with an open kindliness of manner.

There was nothing to prevent Perrin from dropping the subject and remaining good friends. A gentleman or a lover would have so done.

Monsieur Perrin was neither. He said in rather a threatening tone: "You refuse me then, madame!!"

The tone and the words were each singly too much for the baroness's pride. She answered coldly but civilly: —

"I do not refuse you. I do not take an affront into consideration."

"Be calm, my mother," said Josephine; "no affront was intended."

"Ah! here is one that is more reasonable," cried Perrin.

"There are men," continued Josephine, without noticing him, "who look to but one thing, interest. It was an offer made politely in the way of business; decline it in the same spirit, my mother; that is what you have to do."

"Monsieur, you hear what mademoiselle says?"

"I am not deaf, madame."

"She carries politeness a long way. After all, it is a good fault. Well, monsieur, I need not answer you since Mademoiselle de Beaurepaire has answered you; but I detain you no longer."

Strictly a weasel has no business with the temper of a tiger, but this one had, and the long vindictiveness of a Corsican.

"Ah! my little lady, you turn me out of the house, do you?" cried he, grinding his teeth.

"Turn him out of the house! what a phrase! My daughter, where has this man lived?"

"To the Devil with phrases. You turn me out! A man, my little ladies, whom none ever yet insulted without repenting it, and repenting in vain. You are under obligations to me, and you think to turn me out! You are at my mercy, and you think I will let you turn me to your door! Say again to me, either with or without phrases, '*Sortez!*' and by all the devils in less than a month I will stand here, here, here, and say to you, '*Sortez!*'"

"Ah! — *mon Dieu! mon Dieu!*"

"I will say, 'Beaurepaire is mine! Begone from it!'"

When he uttered these terrible words, each of which was a blow with a bludgeon to the baroness, the old lady, whose courage was not equal to her spirit, shrank over the side of her arm-chair and cried piteously: "He threatens me! he threatens me! I am frightened!" and put up her trembling hands, so suggestive was the notary's eloquence of physical violence. Then his brutality received an unexpected check. Imagine that a sparrow-hawk had seized a trembling pigeon, and that a royal falcon swooped, and, with one lightning-like stroke of body and wing, buffeted him away, and there he was on his back, gaping and glaring and grasping at nothing with his claws. So swift and irresistible, but far more terrible and majestic, Josephine de Beaurepaire came from her chair with one gesture of her body between her mother and the notary, who was advancing on her with arms folded in a brutal, menacing way, — not the Josephine we have seen her, the calm, languid beauty, but the demoiselle De Beaurepaire, her great heart on fire, — her blood up, — not her own only, but all the blood of all the De Beaurepaires, — pale as ashes with great wrath, her purple eyes flaring, and her whole panther-like body ready either to spring or strike.

"Slave! you dare to insult her, and before me! *Arrière, misérable!* * or I soil my hand with your face!" And her hand was up with the word, up, up, higher it seemed than ever a hand was lifted before. And if he had hesitated one moment, I believe it would have come down; and

* "Back! wretch!"

if it had he would have gone to her feet before it: not under its weight, — the lightning is not heavy, — but under the soul that would have struck with it: but there was no need; the towering threat and the flaming eye and the swift rush buffeted the caitiff away: he recoiled three steps and nearly fell down. She followed him as he went, strong in that moment as Hercules, beautiful and terrible as Michael driving Satan. He dared not, or rather he could not, stand before her: he wreathed and cowered and recoiled all down the room, while she marched upon him. Then the driven serpent hissed as it wriggled away.

"For all this she too shall be turned out of Beaurepaire, not like me, but forever. I swear it, parole de Perrin."

"She shall never be turned out. I swear it, foi de De Beaurepaire."

"You too, daughter of Sa—"

"*Tais toi, et sors à l'instant même* — LACHE!" *

The old lady moaning and trembling and all but fainting in her chair: the young noble, like a destroying angel, hand in air, and great eye scorching and withering; and the caitiff wriggling out at the door, wincing with body and head, his knees knocking, his heart panting yet raging, his teeth gnashing, his cheek livid, his eye gleaming with the fire of hell.

CHAPTER XII.

"MADEMOISELLE, your mother has sent me here to play with you."

"Monsieur!"

"It is true. She said, 'Go and play with that other child.'"

"Mesdames our mothers take liberties which we do not put up with from a stranger."

"Mademoiselle, I felt like you at such a term being applied to me, but it is sweet to share anything with you, even an affront, a stigma."

"So they sent you to amuse me?" asked the beauty, royally.

"It appears so."

"Whether I like or not?"

"No, mademoiselle, at a word from you I was to leave you: that was understood."

"Go away."

"I go."

He retired.

"Monsieur Riviere," called the lady to him, in a calm, friendly tone as if nothing had happened.

He came back.

"How thoughtless you are: you are going away without telling me what you have been saying to my mother about me behind my back."

"I never mentioned you, mademoiselle!"

"Oh! oh! all the better!"

Then this child told that child all he had said to the baroness, and her replies; and this child blushed in telling it and looked timidly every now and then to see how that capricious child took it: and that capricious child wore a lofty, contemplative air, as much as to say, "I am listening out of politeness to a dry abstract of certain matters purely speculative wherein I have no personal interest." Certain blushes that came and went gave a charming incongruity to the performance, and might have made an aged by-stander laugh.

When he came to tell Josephine's interference, and how her mother thought it was she he loved; and how Josephine, to his great surprise, had favored the delusion; and how, on this, the tide had turned directly in his favor, our young actress being of an impetuous nature and off her guard a moment, burst out, "Ah, I recognize you there, my good Josephine!" but she had no sooner said this than she lowered her eyes and her cheek burned.

Riviere was mystified.

"But, mademoiselle," said he, "do pray explain to me, — can I be mistaken after all? — is she —?"

* "Hold your tongue! and begone this very moment, coward and slave!"

"Is she what?"

"I mean does she — ?"

"Does she what?"

"You know what I mean."

"No, I do not: how should I? The vanity of these children! Now, if she did, would she have confessed before you that she did?"

"Well I am astonished at you, Mademoiselle Laure; Jacintha then is right; you acknowledge that everything your sex says is a falsehood, — O fie!"

"No! not everything," replied Laure, with *naïveté* unparalleled, "only certain things! don't tease me," cried she, with sudden small violence; "of this be sure, that Josephine was a good friend to you, not because she loves children, but because she is not one of us at all, but an angel and loves everybody, — even monsieur."

"This is what I think," said Edouard, gravely. "The baroness fancies you a child, — you are woman enough to puzzle me, mademoiselle."

"That may easily be."

"And Mademoiselle Josephine thought I should not be allowed to come into the house at all, if, at that critical moment, another prejudice came in the way."

"What prejudice?"

"That you are too young to love."

"That is no prejudice, — it is a fact. I am, monsieur, — I am *much* too young."

"No! I was confused. I mean too young to be loved."

"O, I am not too young for that, — not a bit too young."

"And so the angel Josephine temporized, out of pity to me: that is my solution, and, — ah! Heaven bless her!"

"Forgive me if I say your solution is a very absurd one."

"It is the true one."

"Are you sure?"

"Positive."

"Then it is no use my contradicting you."

"Not the least."

"Then I shall not contradict you."

"Ah, well! mademoiselle angel, perhaps my turn will come," said the young man, his lips trembling. "Won't I cut myself in pieces for you at a word, that is all."

"I like you better when you talk so."

"Mademoiselle Laure?"

"Monsieur Edouard?"

"If you will come to where the great oak-tree stands."

"To the Pleasance, you mean?"

"O, the Pleasance, is it? What lovely names everything has here! Well, if you will come into the Pleasance, I will make you a drawing of that dear old tree I love so."

"And what right have you to love it? — it is not yours: it is ours. You are always loving something you have no business to."

"I love things that one can't help loving, — is that a crime?"

"He can't help loving a tree, tender nature!"

"No, I can't help loving a tree out of which you introduced yourself to me."

"Insolent! Well, draw it with two ladies flying out and a boy rooted with terror."

"There is no need. That scene is more than drawn, it is engraved, on all our memories forever!"

"Not on mine! not on mine! Oh! how terrified you were, — ha! ha! — and how terrified we should have been if you had not. Listen: once upon a time — don't be alarmed: it was after Noah — a frightened hare ran by a pond: the frogs splashed into the water in terror. She said, 'Ah ha! there are then those I frighten in my turn: I am the thunderbolt of war.' Excuse my quoting La Fontaine: I am not in 'Charles the Twelfth of Sweden' yet. I am but a child."

"And I am glad of it, for when you grow up you will be too much for me, that is evident. Come, then, mademoiselle the quizzer."

"Monsieur, shall I make you a confession? You will not be angry·

I could not support your displeasure."

"I am afraid you could: so I will not try you."

"Then I have a strange inclination to walk up and down this terrace whilst you draw that tree in the Pleasance."

"Resist that inclination: perhaps it will fly from you."

"No! you fly from me and draw. I will rejoin you in a few minutes."

"Thank you! Not so stupid!"

"Do you doubt my word, sir?" asked she, haughtily.

"Heaven forbid, mademoiselle! only I did not see at first that it was a serious promise you are doing me the honor to make me. I go."

He went, and placed himself on the west side of the oak and took out his sketch-book, and worked zealously and rapidly. He had done the outlines of the tree and was finishing in detail a part of the huge trunk, when his eyes were suddenly dazzled: in the middle of the rugged bark, deformed here and there with great wart-like bosses, and wrinkled, seamed, and ploughed all over with age, burst a bit of variegated color: bright as a poppy on a dungeon wall, it glowed and glittered out through a large hole in the brown bark; it was Laure's face peeping. To our young lover's eye how divine it shone! None of the half-tints of common flesh were there, but a thing all rose, lily, sapphire, and soul. His pencil dropped, his mouth opened, he was downright dazzled by the glowing, bewitching face, sparkling with fun in the gaunt tree. Tell me, ladies, did she know the value of that sombre frame to her brightness? Oh! no,—she was only a child!!!!!!

The moment she found herself detected, the gaunt old tree rang musical with a crystal laugh, and out came the arch-dryad.

"I have been there all the time. How solemn you looked!—ha! ha! Now for the result of such profound study."

He showed her his work; she altered her tone.

"Oh! how clever," she cried, "and how rapid! What a facility you have! Monsieur is an artist," said she, gravely; "I will be more respectful," and she dropped him a low courtesy. "Mind you promised it to me," she added, sharply.

"You will accept it, then?"

"That I will: it will be worth having: I never reckoned on that,—hence my *nonchalance*. Finish it directly," cried this peremptory young person.

"First I must trouble you to stand out there near the tree."

"What for?"

"Because I want a contrast. The tree is a picture of Age and gradual decay; by its side, then, I must place a personification of Youth and growing loveliness."

She did not answer, but made a sort of pirouette, and went where she was bid, and stood there with her back to the artist.

"But that will not do, mademoiselle; you must turn round."

"O, very well." And when she came round he saw her color was high. Flattery is sweet.

This child of nature was pleased, and ashamed that it should be seen that she was pleased,—and so he drew her; and kept looking off the paper at her, and had a right in his character of artist to look her full in the face, and he did so with long, lingering glances beginning severe and business-like, and ending tender, that she, poor girl, hardly knew which way to look, not to be scorched up by his eye like a tender flower, or blandly absorbed like the pearly dew. Ah! happy hour! ah! happy days of youth, and innocence, and first love!

"Here is my sister. Ah! something is the matter!"

Josephine came towards them, pale and panting.

"O my children," she cried, and could not speak a moment for agitation.

They came round her in the greatest concern.

"A great misfortune has fallen on us, and I am the cause."

"O Heaven!"

"We have an enemy now, a deadly enemy. Perrin the notary; Laure — monsieur — he insulted us — he insulted my mother — I could not bear that — I insulted *him*."

"You, Josephine?"

"Yes! you may well wonder. How little we know ourselves! but our mother was trembling in her chair, her noble, her beloved face all pale, — all pale, — and she put up her hands before her sacred head, for the ruffian was threatening her with his loud voice and brutal gestures."

"O my poor mother!"

"*Sacr-r-rè canaille!* — and I not there!"

"Then in a moment, I know not how, I was upon him, and I cried, 'Back, wretch!'"

"Well done."

"With my hand over his head. O, if he had faced me a moment, I should have struck him with all my soul, and in the face. I should have killed him. I was stronger than lions, and as fierce. I was not myself. I knew no fear; I who now am all fear again. My children, it was but a single coward, — had it been a regiment of braves, I should have flung myself upon them, — for my mother. Madwoman that I was!"

"You noble creature — you goddess — I only loved you, and honored you — now I adore you."

"O Edouard, you do not see what my violence has done. Alas! I who love my sister so have ruined her. I have ruined the mother I tried to protect. I have ruined the house of Beaurepaire. For that shrinking coward has the heart of a fiend. He told us he had never forgiven an affront, — and he holds our fate in his hands. 'You turn me out of the room,' he yelled (oh! I turn cold now when I think of his words), 'I will turn you out of the room, and out of the house as well. You stand here and say to me, '*Sortez!*' In a little while I will stand here, — here, and say to you, '*Sortez!*' He will do it. It is written in my heart, so hot with rage a moment ago, so cold with terror now — he will do it — he will come armed with the law — the iron law — and say to us poor debtors — '*Sortez!*'"

"And if he does," said Edouard, firmly, and cutting each word with his clenching teeth, "this is what will happen. I will cut his liver out with my dog-whip before you all, and you will not go at all."

"That is spoken like a man!" cried Laure, warmly.

"You talk like a child," said Josephine. "Yet perhaps you might do something. Will you do something for me?"

"Did you do nothing for me today, that you put such a question?"

"We will not speak of that, my friend."

"No," cried the boy, trembling with emotion, "we will not talk of it; these are not things to *talk* of; but we will —" And for lack of words he seized upon both her hands and kissed them violently, and then seized her gown and kissed that.

"You know Bonard the farmer, — he lives about a league from this."

"Yes! yes!"

"Run thither across the meadows, and find out whether Perrin has been to him since leaving the chateau. He has only a few minutes' start; you will perhaps arrive before he leaves."

"Before he leaves! I shall be there before him. Do you think a dun cow can carry a scoundrel towards villany as fast as I can go to please an angel?"

"You will come back to Beaurepaire and tell me?"

"Yes! yes!" and he was gone.

The sisters followed slowly to the gate, and watched the impetuous boy run across the park.

"He does not take the path," said Josephine.

"O," said Laure, "what are paths to him? He has no prejudice in favor of beaten tracks. He is going the shortest way to Bonard, that we may be sure of."

"How gallantly he runs, Laure; how high he holds his head; how easily he moves; and yet how he clears the ground, — already at the edge of the park."

"Yes, but, Josephine, the strong bramble hedge, — there is no gap there, — no stile. What will he do? Ah!"

Edouard had solved the riddle of the hedge; by a familiar manœuvre unknown to those ladies until that moment, he increased his pace and took a flying leap right at the hedge, but, turning in the air, came at it with his back instead of his face, and, by his weight and impetus, contrived to burst through Briareus in a moment, and was next seen a furlong beyond it.

The girls looked at one another. Josephine smiled sadly. Laure looked up hopefully.

"All our lives we have thought that hedge a barrier no mortal could pass, — he did n't make much of it. Have courage then, my sister."

"Laure, go in and comfort our mother."

"Yes, my sister, — alone? Where are you going?"

"To the oratory."

"Ah! you are right."

"O Laure, the blessing and the comfort of believing the God of the fatherless is stronger than wicked men. Dark days are coming, my sister."

CHAPTER XIII.

Laure tried to comfort her mother; the consoling topic she chose was young Riviere. She described his zeal, his determination to baffle the enemy, how, she did not know, but she was sure he would somehow; and, to crown all, his jumping through the hedge.

The baroness listened like a wounded porcupine round whom a fly buzzes. The notary was her wound; the statesman her worrying fly. When her patience was exhausted, she lashed out against him.

Now, capricious imps like Laure, whom their very nature seems to impel to tease and flout, and even quarrel with a lover to his face, are balanced by another strong impulse, — viz. to defend him behind his back, ay, with more spirit than those who have more loving natures. Perhaps they feel they owe him this reparation. Perhaps to abuse him is to infringe their monopoly, and they can't stand that.

Laure defended Edouard so warmly, that, between her mother's sagacity and her own vexation at his being sneered at by anybody but her, and also at her being called once or twice in the course of the argument by the hateful epithet "a child," it transpired that she was the young lady Edouard came to Beaurepaire for.

The baroness was so shocked at this that Laure repented bitterly her unguarded tongue.

"O mamma! don't look so, — pray, don't look so! Mamma dear, be angry again, do pray be very angry: but don't look so at your Laure. I could not help growing up. I could not help being like you, mamma. So then they call that being pretty, and come teasing me. But I am not obliged to love him, mamma, do pray remember that. I don't care for him the least in the world, not as I do for you and Josephine; and if he brings dissension here, I shall hate him! ah yes! you could easily make me hate him, — poor boy!"

"I was wrong: it is a weakness of parents never to see that their children are young women."

"I am nineteen and a half, my mother, and he is only twenty-one. So, you see, it is very natural."

"Yes! it is very natural, — there,

go and tell the doctor all that has happened this miserable day. For I am worn out, — quite worn out. Let me have some one of my own age to talk to. Ah! how unhappy I am!"

Never since our story commenced did a sadder, gloomier party sit round the little table and its one candle in the corner of that vast saloon.

Josephine filled with gloomy apprehensions, and accusing herself of the ruin of the family.

The doctor, sharing her anxieties, and bitterly mortified at the defeat of reason and St. Aubin: at having been deceived by this wolf in sheep's clothing.

Laure sad, for now for the first time they were not all united in opinion, as well as in trouble, and she herself the cause.

The baroness in a state of prostration, and looking years older than in the morning.

"You are worn out, madame," said the good doctor; "let me persuade you to retire to rest a little earlier than usual."

"No, my friend, I want to sit and look at you all a little longer. Who knows how long we shall be together?"

There was a heavy silence.

Laure whispered to Josephine: "Tell our mother she can dismiss him whenever she pleases: it is all one to me."

"No! no!" said Josephine, "that is not what she is thinking of. She is right: I have ruined you all."

The door opened.

"Monsieur Riviere," cried Jacintha: and a moment after the young man shone in the doorway.

"Is this an hour —?" began the baroness.

"He comes by my request," said Josephine, hastily.

"That is a different thing."

Edouard came down the saloon with a brisk step and a general animation, and joined the languid group like a sunbeam struggling into thick fog. He bowed all round.

"Mademoiselle, he has been there. As I jumped over the last stile, that dun pony trotted into the yard; I say, how he must have spurred him."

Josephine, who had risen all excited to hear his report, sat down again with a gentle, desponding mien.

"I waited in ambush to see what became of him. He was with the farmer a good hour, — then he went home. I followed him; but I did nothing, — you understand, because I had not precise orders from you; but I went hence, and got my dog-whip, — here it is: whenever you give the word, or hold up your little finger to that effect, it shall be applied, and with a will," — crack, and the ex-school-boy smacked his whip, meaning to make a little crack, but it went off like a pistol-shot.

"Ah!" cried the baroness, and nearly jumped out of her seat.

Edouard was abashed.

"The young savage!" cried Laure, and smiled approvingly.

"It is no question of dog-whips," said St. Aubin, with dignity.

"And the man is enough our enemy without our giving him any real cause to hate us," remonstrated Josephine.

"We shall not be here long," muttered the baroness, gloomily.

"Forgive me if I venture to contradict you, madame."

"We are ruined, — and no power can save us."

"Yes, madame, there is one who can."

"Who can save me now?" asked the baroness, with deep despondency.

"I!"

"You? child?"

"I! if you will permit me."

This frantic announcement took them so by surprise that they had not even the presence of mind to exclaim against its absurdity, but sat looking at one another.

The statesman took advantage of

their petrifaction, and began to do a little bit of pomposity.

"Madame the baroness, and you, monsieur, who have honored me with your esteem, and you, Mademoiselle de Beaurepaire, whom I adore, and you, Mademoiselle Laure whom I — whom I hope to be permitted — whom I — listen all. You have this day done me the honor to admit me to an intimacy I have long sought in vain: let me then this day try to make you some small return, and to justify in some degree Monsieur St. Aubin, my kind advocate. Madame, it is your entire ignorance of business, and unfortunate neglect of your property, that make you fancy yourself ruined."

The baroness laughed bitterly at the boy. Then her head drooped.

"Let us come to facts. You are living now upon about one thousand two hundred francs a year, — the balance of your rents, after the interest of your loans is paid."

Oh! — and they were astounded and terrified at his knowledge of their secret, and blushed in silence for their poverty.

"Your real balance, after paying your creditors, is — that is, ought to be — five thousand two hundred francs. Your farms are let a good forty per cent below their value: your tenants are of two classes, — those who never had any leases, and those whose leases have long been run out. The tenants are therefore in your power, and whenever you can pluck up resolution to have your real income, say the word, and I will get it you."

The baroness smiled faintly.

"Monsieur," said she, "you are right, I understand little of business; but this I know, that the farms are let too high, not too low. They all say so."

"Who says so, madame?"

"They who should know best, — the tenants themselves. Two of their wives came here last week and complained of the hard times."

"What! the smooth-faced cheats, the liars whose interest it is to chant that tune. Give me better evidence."

"That man, the notary, he said so. And in that point at least I see not what interest — "

"You — don't — see — what — interest — he has!" cried Edouard.

"*On me coupe la parole*," * said the fine lady, dolefully, looking round with an air of piteous surprise on them all.

"Forgive me, madame: zeal for you boiled over; but now *is* it possible you don't see what interest that *canaille* of a pettifogger has?"

"What phrases!"

"In humbugging you on that point!"

"It is a whole vocabulary!!!"

"Blame the things and the people, not me, madame, since I do but call both by their true names."

"Which, if not so polite as to call them by other names, is more scientific," suggested St. Aubin.

"Madame, pray see the thing as it is, and if you insist on elegant phrases, well, then: Beaurepaire is a dying kid that all the little ravens about here are feeding on, and all the larger vultures, or Perrins, are scheming to carry away to their own nests. The estate of Beaurepaire is the cream of the district. The first baron knew how to choose land; perhaps he took the one bit of soil on which he found something growing by the mere force of nature, all being alike uncultivated in that barbarous time: it is a rich clay watered by half a dozen brooks. Ah! if you could farm it yourself, as my uncle does his, you might be wealthy in spite of its encumbrances."

"Farm it ourselves! Is he mad?"

"No, madame; it is not I who am mad. Why, if you go to that, it requires no skill to deal with meadow land, especially such land as yours, in which the grass springs of itself. *Fundit humo facilem victum justissima tellus*, doctor. There, I will back Jacintha to farm it for you, without spoiling the dinner. She has more

* He takes the words out of my mouth.

intelligence than meadow land asks. In that case your income would be twelve thousand francs a year. The very idea makes you ill. Well, I withdraw it; and there go seven thousand francs per annum; but the three thousand francs I must and will force upon you for the young ladies' sake; and justice's and common sense's, — do you consent? but, monsieur, the baroness is ill, — she does not answer me! her lips are colorless! O, what have I done? I have killed her by my *brusquerie*."

"It is nothing, my child," said the baroness, faintly: "too much trouble, — too much grief," — and she was sinking back in her chair, but Laure's arm was already supporting her, and Josephine holding salts to her.

"It is fatigue," said the doctor. "The baroness should have retired to rest earlier, after so trying a day."

"He is right, my children. At my age ladies cannot defy their medical adviser with impunity. Your arm, my youngest," said she; and she retired slowly, leaning upon Laure.

This little shade of preference was a comfort to Laure after the short-lived differences of the day; and Josephine it would seem did not think it quite accidental, for she resisted her desire to come on her mother's other side, and only went slowly before them with the light.

On the young ladies' return they were beset with anxious inquiries by Edouard. St. Aubin interrupted them.

"They will not tell you the truth," said he, "perhaps they do not even know it. It is partly fatigue, partly worry: but these would not kill her so fast as they are doing, — if — if — her food was more generous — more — more nutritious!" and the doctor groaned.

"O doctor," cried Laure, "we give her the best we have."

"I know you do, little angel, but you give her delicacies, — she wants meat; you give her spiced and perfumed slops, — she wants the essence of soup; and what are grapes and apples and pears and peaches? — water: what are jellies? — sticky water, water and glue, but not fibre: what are salads? — water: what are nearly all vegetables? ninety-six parts in the hundred water; this has been lately proved by analysis in Paris, by a friend of mine. Nature is very cunning, she disguises water with a hundred delicious flavors; and then we call it food. Farina and flesh, those two are food: the rest are water, air, nothing. The baroness is at an age when people ought to eat little at a time, but often, and only sovereign food."

"She shall have it from this day," cried Edouard. "Let us conspire."

"O yes," cried Laure, "let us conspire!"

"Let us be kinder to her than she will ever be to herself. You saw how prompt she was to oppose my plans for baffling her enemies? Let us act without her knowledge."

"But how?"

"Let me see. First let us think of her health."

"O yes! that first of all."

"Ah! thank you, Edouard," cried Josephine, warmly.

"Well, then, we must begin thus. One of you young ladies must ask to be allowed to manage the household matters. You can say you wish to prepare yourself for the day when you shall yourself be mistress of an establishment. Perhaps, Mademoiselle Laure, you would make the proposal?"

"Me! I shall never be mistress of an establishment," said Laure, dolefully and pettishly. She added, in quite a different key, "I do not mean to: I would not for the world."

"What a violent disclaimer," said Josephine; "it will be best for me to make the proposal. I will be apparent mistress of the house, but, as Laure rules me in all things, she will be the real mistress. Will that meet my friend's views?"

"Provided she can be got to obey

me," was Edouard's answer. "May I ask for another candle?" The bell was rung. "Another candle, Jacintha."

Meantime, Edouard, too eager to wait for anything long, took out of his pocket a map, and spread it all over the table: Jacintha came in, and, being tormented with curiosity, took a long time lighting the candle, with a face made stolid for the occasion.

"Now you all know what this is a map of?"

"No!" said Laure, "it is not France; but what country it is I don't know."

"O fie! Jacintha knows, I'll be bound. What map is this, Jacintha?"

"It is Italy," replied Jacintha, firmly, and without any of that hesitation which in some minds accompanies entire ignorance of a subject.

Edouard groaned.

"Well, I did think *she* would have known Beaurepaire when she saw it."

Jacintha gave an incredulous toss of her head.

"How can it be Beaurepaire? Beaurepaire is in Brittany, and this country is bigger than Brittany. Brittany is down stairs."

"Ah!" cried Laure, "here is the chateau!"

"Saints preserve us, so it is, mademoiselle, I declare. And here is the park, and two ladies walking in it, but I don't see monsieur: nevertheless he is as often there as you are, mesdemoiselles," said Jacintha, demurely.

"What an unfortunate omission!"

"I am glad you think so: it is easily supplied," and with his pencil he rapidly inserted a male figure walking with the ladies, and its body paying them a world of obsequious attention.

Jacintha retired with a grin.

The map was warmly admired.

"O, I used always to get a prize for them at the Polytechnic."

"And so beautifully colored: but what are all these names?" said Josephine, "the Virgin's Coppice? I never heard of that."

"Oh! oh!" cried Edouard, "she never heard of the Virgin's Coppice. What is it? Why, it is a sort of marsh: I shot a brace of snipes in it the other day."

"But you have not painted any trees on it to show it is a coppice."

"Trees? there is not a tree in it, and has not been this two or three hundred years."

"Then why do we call it a coppice still?"

"I don't know: all I know is, there are snipes in it,—no small virtue."

Laure. "The Deer Park,—I never heard of that."

Edouard (lifting up his hands). "They don't know their own fields: the Deer Park is a ploughed field not far from Dard's house, which you may behold. Now give me your attention." The young man then showed them the homesteads of the several tenants, and pointed out the fields that belonged to each farm, and the very character of the soil of each field.

They gazed at him in half-stupefied wonder, and at the mass and precision of his knowledge on a subject where they were not only profoundly ignorant, but had not even deemed knowledge accessible to ladies and gentlemen. He concluded by assuring them that he had carefully surveyed and valued every field on the estate, and that the farms were let full forty per cent below their value.

"Now, mesdemoiselles, your mother has a claim upon the estate for her jointure, but you are the true proprietors."

"Are we?"

"O gracious Heavens! they did not even know who their estate belonged to. Well, give me an authority, on this paper, to act as your agent, or we shall never get our forty per cent. Neither you nor your

mother are any match for these sheep-faced rustics, — leeches who have been sucking your blood this fifty years, — crying hyenas that have been moaning and whining because they could not gnaw your bones as well."

"My friend," said Josephine, "I would do this with pleasure, but mamma would be so hurt, it is impossible."

"Mademoiselle — Josephine — you saw how your mother received my proposals for her good and yours. Consider, I am strong enough to defeat your enemies, provided I have none but enemies to battle; but if I am to fight the baroness, and her prejudices, as well as Perrin and the tenants, then failure is certain, and I wash my hands of it."

"But consider, impetuous boy, we cannot defy our mother, whom we love so."

"Defy her? no! But you need not go and tell her everything you do."

"Certainly not. You know, doctor, we kept from her Bonard's threat till the danger seemed passed."

"And we did well," cried Laure; "think if she had known what was hanging over her all that time!"

"What do you say, doctor?" asked Josephine.

"I don't know, my dear. It is a hard alternative. As a general rule I don't like deception."

"I do not propose deception," said the young man, blushing; "only a wise reticence; and without this reticence, this reserve, even my plan for improving her diet must fail."

"In that case I take the sin of reticence on me. I claim the post of honor!" cried Laure, with great agitation and glistening eyes.

"I consent!" exclaimed Josephine; "this child, so young, so pure, cannot be wrong."

"All I know is," said the doctor, "that the more roast meat she has, and the less worry, the longer my poor friend will live."

"O give me the paper, Edouard, we will both authorize you, and thank you for letting us."

"Yes! yes! and we will do whatever he advises us," cried Laure; "that is, you shall, — I'll see about it."

"And O doctor," said Josephine, "what a comfort it is to have some one about us who has energy and decision and, above all, takes the command!"

The next day Edouard came into the kitchen and adopted Jacintha into the conspiracy: consulted her how to smuggle nutriment into the baroness, and bar the tenants from all access to her for a while. He told her why.

"*Canaille* of tenants," she cried, "this then has been your game all these years: good, — wait till the next of you comes here pulling a long face, crocodiles: I'll tell you my mind!"

"No! no! anything but that: they would say it is Jacintha who keeps us from the baroness, and they would write to her or try a dozen artifices to gain her ear."

"You are right, my son: I was stupid; no, it shall be diamond cut diamond. I'll meet them with a face as smooth as their own, and say to them — what shall I say to the *canaille?*"

"Say the baroness in her failing state sees no one on business; say also that she has made over the control of the property to her daughters and their agent: add that — ahem — she is dying!"

"Yes! that is the best of all to say; but stay, no, — it is not lucky. Perhaps in that case she will die, and I shall have killed —"

"Stuff! people don't die to make other people's words good, that would be too stupid: cut me forty bunches of grapes."

Jacintha looked rueful.

"My dear, it is not for me to deny you."

"I don't ask you to deny me."

"Well, but forty bunches!"

"Order from the mistress!" said the young man, pompously drawing out a paper.

It ran thus: —

"*Jacintha, do whatever Monsieur Riviere bids you!*

"JOSEPHINE DE BEAUREPAIRE."

"Well, to be sure. I say, you have not lost much time, my young monsieur. At least tell me what you want forty bunches of grapes for?"

Before he could answer came a clatter, and a figure hopped in with a crutch.

"Why, Dard! a sight of you is good for sore eyes. Who would have thought you could have got so far as this!"

"I am going farther than this. I am going down to the town to sell your grapes, and such like belly vengeance, and bring back grub, — aha!"

"O, that is the game, is it, my lads?" cried Jacintha.

"That, and no other," replied Dard.

"If the baroness comes to hear of it, won't you catch it, that is all!"

"But she never will hear of it, unless you tell her."

"O, I sha' n't tell her. I durst n't. She would faint away. Here is a down-come. Selling our fruit. Ah! well-a-day. What is Beaurepaire coming to?"

"Will you go and cut them?" cried Riviere, stamping with impatience.

"Well, I am going," snapped Jacintha.

Dard had got a little cart outside, and his grandmother's jackass.

"Citizen, if you will bring the hampers out of my cart into the garden, I will help her cut the fruit; it is all I am fit for at the present. I am no longer a man. Behold me a robin-redbreast, hop-ping a-bout!"

"We may as well be killed for a sheep as a lamb," said Jacintha, dolefully. "I have pulled a few dozen peaches. It is a highway robbery; they would have rotted on the tree. O Dard! you won't ever let the folks know where they come from?"

"No, no! he has got his lessons from me."

"That is a different thing: what would they say if they knew? Why, that we are at our last gasp! Selling our very fruit off our walls"; and the corner of her apron was lifted to her eye.

"You great baby," cried Edouard; "don't you see this is the beginning of common sense, and proper economy, and will end in riches?"

Dard shrugged his shoulders.

"Reason is too good a thing to waste: let her snivel!"

"Now, Dard," cried Jacintha, cheerfully, "what I want *most* is some lard, some butter, some meal, a piece of veal, a small joint of mutton, and a bit of beef for soup; but a little chocolate would not be amiss, our potatoes are very short, and you can bring up some white beans, if you see any good ones."

"Nothing more than that wanted?" inquired Dard.

"Yes. Was I mad? Coffee is wanted most dismally."

"Buy it if you dare!" cried Riviere. "No, Dard, that is my affair, and mine alone."

Presently there was a fresh anxiety. Dard would be recognized, and, by him, the folk would know out of what garden came his merchandise.

"All is provided for," said Edouard. "Dard, embellish thyself."

Dard drew out of his pocket a beard and put it on.

"Is he Dard now?"

"My faith, no!"

"Is he even human?"

"Not too much so, ha! ha! — well, Beaurepaire is alive since you came into it, my *gaillard!*"

"Now you know," said Dard, "if I am to do this little job to-day, I must start."

"Who keeps you?" was the reply.

Thus these two loved.

Edouard had no sooner embellished, primed, and started Dard, by fencing with a pointed stick at his jackass, which like a ship was a good traveller but a coy starter, than he went round to all the tenants with St. Aubin. He showed them his authority, and offered them leases at forty per cent advance on the present rent. They refused, to a man.

It came out that most of them had been about to propose a reduction, but had forborne out of good feeling towards the baroness. And that same feeling would perhaps give them the courage to go on under the burden a year or two longer, but as for advancing the rent a sou, never ! !

Others could not be got to take a grave view of so merry a proposal. They were all good-humor and jokes, with satire underneath, at the jolly audacity of talking of raising the Beaurepaire rents : with one and all Riviere was short and clear.

"There is my card : the leases await you at my house : you must come and sign in three days ! "

"And if I should happen not to come nor sign either, my little monsieur ? "

"In that case a writ of ejectment will be served on you before sunset of the third day. Adieu ! "

"All the better for me," sang out one as Edouard retired.

The doctor was much discouraged.

"This universal consent surely goes to prove — "

"That they have a common interest in deceiving."

"You are very young to think so ill of men."

"I have been months in a government office. Ah ! monsieur, I have seen men too near : I left the Polytechnic with illusions about honesty and sincerity among men, — puff they are gone."

"Are they ? then accursed be the hour you ever saw a government office."

"No, no : but for my experience under government I should not be so sharp, and if I was not sharp I could not serve our sacred cause."

"Still at your age to have lost all confidence in men and women ! "

"I beg your pardon," cried the misanthropist, eagerly, "not in women : they have none of the vices of men ; no selfishness, no heartlessness. I see in them some little tendency to fib, — I mean in the uneducated ones ! but, dear me, their fibs are so innocent. Women ! ! we men are not worthy to share the earth with them."

The doctor smiled. For the last thirty or forty years he had no longer been able to see this prodigious difference between the sexes.

"And can all these honest male faces be deceiving us ? " asked he.

"What ? because they are round ! I too used to picture to myself a sharper with a sharp face — eyes close together — foxy : but I soon found your true Tartuffe is the round-visaged or square-faced fellow. He seems a lump of candor : he is a razor keen and remorseless. There are no better actors in the *Théâtre Français* than these frank peasants. You will see. Good by ; I must run to the town for drafts of leases, Mocha coffee, and writs of ejectment."

There were in the little town in question two notaries, Perrin and Picard, on good terms with each other outwardly.

Though young and impetuous, and subject to gusts of vanity, Edouard was not so shallow as to despise an enemy of whom he knew nothing but that he was a lawyer. No. He said to himself : "We have a notary against us. I must play a notary." He went to Picard, and began by requesting him to draw up seven agreements for leases, and to have ready three or four writs of ejectment. Having thus propitiated the notary by doing actual business with him, he began cautiously to hint at the other notary's enmity to Beaurepaire.

"You surprise me," said Picard. "I really think you must be mistaken. Monsieur Perrin owes all to that fam-

ily. It was the baron who launched him. How often have I seen him, when a boy, hold the baron's horse, and be rewarded by a silver coin. O no, Monsieur Perrin is a man that bears a fair character: I cannot believe this of him."

This defence of his competitor looked so like master asp in his basket of figs, that Edouard hesitated no longer, but gave him the general features of the case, and went by rapid gradations into a towering passion.

Picard proposed to him to be cool.

"I cannot," said he, "enter into your feud with Perrin, for the best of all reasons: I do business with him."

Edouard looked blank.

"He is also a respectable man."

Edouard looked blanker.

"But, on the other hand, you are now my client, monsieur, and he is not my client. You understand?"

"Perfectly," said Edouard. "You are an honest man," he cried, not stopping to pick his epithets, and seized the notary's hand, and shook it: it let itself be shaken, and was in that and other respects like cold jelly. Its owner invited him to tell the whole story.

"Never have any reserves with your notary," said he, severely; "that is the grand folly of clients: and then they come and blame us if we make a mistake; they forget that it is they who mislead us."

On this theme he rose to tepid. He dwelt on this abominable practice of clients, till Edouard found out that lawyers are the worst-used people living.

But who is not that?

They put their heads together, and Edouard found what an advantage his new friend's coolness and command of temper gave him, and he vowed to ally his own energy to the notary's cold blood.

When he was gone, Picard went into his clerk's room and gave him an order to draw up agreements for leases, leaving blanks for the names: then he added:—

"What do you think? The rascal is scheming to get hold of Beaurepaire now."

"Is it possible? But it is just like him," said the clerk.

"But I'll put a spoke in his wheel," said Picard.

Josephine was now household queen at Beaurepaire; Laure, viceroy over her. This young lady was born to command, and Nature prevailed over seniority. Therein Nature was rewarded by the approbation, the warm approbation, of Monsieur Edouard Riviere. That young statesman elected himself prime minister to the lady-lieutenant; and so great was his deference to her judgment, even on points where she was unfathomably ignorant, that he was forever seeking grave conferences with her.

The leading maxim with them all was that the baroness was on no account to be worried or alarmed, nor her prejudices shocked: where these stood between her own comfort and her friends' plans for that comfort, the governing powers made a little *detour* and evaded collisions with them.

For instance, the baroness would never have consented to sell a Beaurepaire grape. She would have starved sooner, or lived on the grapes; if diarrhœaing can be called living. So when she demanded of Queen Josephine how there came such an influx of beef, mutton, and veal into the chatean, Lieutenant Laure explained that Edouard had begged Josephine to give him some fruit that was rotting on the walls, and she had consented.

"It seems, mamma, that these government officers interchange civilities with the tradespeople. So he made presents of fruit to those he deals with, and they sent him in return — he! he! — specimens of their several arts. And he never dines at home now, but always here. So he sent them over, and do you know I think it is as well he did, for that boy eats like a wolf, does n't he, Josephine?"

"Yes, love," said Josephine. "What did you say, dear? I was

full of my thoughts, my forebodings."

"Then what right had you to say 'yes'?"

"Because it was you who appealed to me, my sister."

"No, no, no! it is your nature to say that silliest of words, — that is why."

The baroness took no notice of this by-talk

"I should not like *him* not to have enough," said she, with some hesitation.

In short Doctors Laure and Josephine so gilded the meat pills that the baroness swallowed them, and was none the worse for them, actually!

Another day dead chickens flooded the larder.

"O mamma, come and see what the tenants have sent us!"

"The good souls! and these are the people whose rents he talked of raising."

"Who minds what he says, mamma? — a young madman."

Another fine day it rained eggs. These too were fathered upon the tenants.

Hope then to escape false accusations!!

In these and many other ways they beguiled the old lady for her good. The baroness was not to see or hear anything but what she would like to see and hear.

"Do not deceive her unnecessarily. But deceive her rather than thwart or vex her."

This was the leading maxim of the new queen-craft, and all played their part to perfection, — none better than Jacintha, who, besides a ready invention and an oily tongue, possessed in an eminent degree the *vultus clausus* of the Latins, — *volto Sciolto* of their descendants: in English, a close face. And, though they entered on this game with hesitation, yet they soon warmed in it. The new guile was charming. To defraud a beloved one of discomfort, — to cheat her into a good opinion of all she wished to think well of, — to throw a veil, a silver tissue of innocent fibs, between her and trouble, — to smuggle sovereign food into her mouth and more sovereign hope into her heart. Pious frauds! and you know many a holy man has justified these in writings dedicated to the Church, and practised them for the love of God and the good of man.

The baroness's health, strength, and spirits improved visibly.

CHAPTER XIV.

On the third day a tenant called on Riviere, hemmed and hawed, and prepared to draw distant, but converging lines of circumvallation round the subject of Rent.

Riviere cut the process short.

"I am a public man, and have no time to waste in verbiage. On that table is a seven years' lease, with blanks; you can sign it at forty per cent increased rent, or, by paying a bonus of one thousand francs, at thirty per cent."

The man attempted to remonstrate.

Riviere cut him dead short this time.

The farmer then lowered his voice.

"I have got a thousand francs in my pocket," said he.

"O, you prefer the thirty per cent, and the bonus. Very well."

"That is not what I mean. You and I might do better than that. We will say nothing about a bonus; you shall clap on ten per cent to show your zeal to the landlord, and *this*," lowering his voice, "will be for you, and no questions asked."

Riviere's first impulse was to hit him; the next was to laugh at him, which he accordingly did.

"My man," said he, "you must be very much in love with dishonesty. Now listen: if I report that little proposal of yours at Beaurepaire, you will never get a lease upon any terms."

"But you won't! you won't!"

"Won't I? if you don't come to book in five minutes, I will!"

"Give me ten, and I will see about it."

"Humph? I don't see what you want with ten minutes, — but take them."

The farmer retired, and very soon after voices were heard and heavy feet, and in came four farmers.

Riviere grinned. No. 1 had been secretly a deputation. The little lot had been all under the window, waiting till the agent should have taken the bribe, and made them all right with Beaurepaire. But when No. 1 came down with his hair standing on end, to tell them that he had fallen in with a monster, a being unknown, fabulous, incredible, an agent that would not swindle his master, they succumbed as the bravest spirits must, even Macbeth, before the supernatural.

They came up stairs, and sorrowfully knuckled down; only No. 1 put in a hope that they were not to be treated worse than those who had not come to him at all.

"Certainly not."

"Because two or three are gone to the chateau."

"They shall gain nothing by that."

"But *we* said why plague the baroness: she is old. She is at death's door. Lastly she has got an honest agent; let us go to him."

N. B.—They had all been at the chateau; but Jacintha had fooled the lot.

Riviere opened a door and beckoned. Out popped M. Picard's clerk, brisk and smiling.

"You have got the writs in your pocket."

"Seven of them, monsieur."

The farmers looked at one another.

"The moment we have settled these leases, run up to the chateau, and, if you catch any farmers prowling about, serve them—he! he! Now, messieurs."

A rustling of parchments,— a crushing of pens to death on the table to see what they would stand on paper, — a putting out of tongues to write well, — a writing ill, — a looking at the work after it was done,— a wrenching out of bags of silver from the breeches-pocket like molars from the jaws, — a sighing, — a making of bows,— a clattering down the stair, — a dying away of feet and voices, — and nothing was left but the four money-bags dispersed at intervals over the floor, and the statesman dancing a Saraband among them.

CHAPTER XV.

Wildish conduct. But sixty years ago when a man was a boy he was young. And, besides, the *gaillard* was not born in the isle of fogs.

Such relaxations are brief with busy men. In another five minutes he was off to the chateau. He went the shortest way across the park, and, as he drew near the little gate, lo! the Pleasance was full of people. He was soon among them. Besides the doctor and the two young ladies there were three farmers and two farmers' wives. Failing in their attempts to see the baroness, and believing Jacintha's story that she never came down stairs, but employed herself on the second floor in pious offices and in departing this life, they had been sore puzzled what to do; but, catching a sight of the young ladies going out for a walk, they had boldly rushed into the Pleasance and intercepted them, and told them the tale of their wrongs so glibly and with such heartiness and uniformity of opinion, and in tones so mellow and convincing, that both the ladies and the doctor inclined to their view.

"We will talk to Monsieur Riviere," said Josephine, kindly: "ah! here he is."

"Yes, here I am. I thought I should find you here, good people. Well, have you piped your tune? are you overburdened with rent already? is your part of the estate cold and sour, and does it lie low, &c., &c., &c., &c., &c., &c., eh?"

"Yes," cried Laure, "they have. La!"

"And it is too true, monsieur."

Chorus. "Too true."

"Jacques Pirot," cried Edouard, sternly, "last market-day you broke a bottle of wine, I use your own phrase, with the man who bought your calves."

"Well, monsieur, was that a sin?"

"When you had broken that, and spilled the wine into your gullet, you broke another."

"And that is what brings you home from market the face red and the tongue stuttering," cackled Pirot's wife, there present.

"Silence!" cried Edouard. "When the wine is in, the truth comes out, even of a farmer. You bragged that Grapinet had offered you fifteen hundred francs to change farms with him, and that you had laughed in his face."

"Do not believe it, mademoiselle; it is not true."

"Liar! I heard you. You too were there, Rennacon, drunk and truthful, — two events that happen to you once a week, — thanks to Bacchus, not to Rennacon. You boasted that Braconnier had offered to change with you and give you two thousand francs."

"I lied! I lied!" cried Rennacon, eagerly.

"Unjust to thyself! it was thy half-hour for speaking the truth."

"Now, mademoiselle, deign to cast your eyes on these parchments. These are leases. Grapinet and Pepin and Braconnier have just signed; their rent is advanced thirty per cent."

General exclamation of the doctor and ladies.

Looks of surprise and dismay from the others.

"For which favor —"

"He calls that a favor."

"They have just paid me one thousand francs apiece. You, by your own showing, can pay me two thousand five hundred francs instead of a thousand. Now I will make a bargain with you. Sign similar leases here in three minutes, and I will let you off for one thousand francs each; hesitate, and I will have two thousand francs."

"I will not sign at all, for one."

"Nor I."

"Nor I."

Chorus of women: —

"We will sign away our lives sooner."

Edouard shouted: —

"Jacintha, — Jacintha!"

Jacintha appeared with suspicious celerity, the distance from the kitchen to the Pleasance considered.

"Fetch me a good pen and some ink."

"But they say they will not sign," said Laure.

"They will sign, mademoiselle. Monsieur Chose, approach, — serve the ejectments."

The clerk, who had just arrived, but stood aloof, drew out three slips of stamped paper, and made three steps forward.

The effect was like a pistol presented at each head. The whole party set up their throats: —

"Wait a moment, for Heaven's sake! Mademoiselle, it is for you to speak. This is to usurp your place. Do not let them persecute honest men, who have paid their rent faithfully they and their forbears to you and yours in quiet times and troubled times, in good harvests and bad harvests."

"Messieurs," replied Josephine, "M. Riviere, my good friend, has deigned to act as our agent. It would be little delicate on my part were I, after the trouble he has taken, to interfere with his proceedings. Settle then this affair with him, who appears to understand your sentiments, whereas my sister and I we do not understand you." And she withdrew quietly a little way, like an angel gently evading moral pitch.

"Are you satisfied? is every door shut? here is Jacintha! In one word, will you sign or will you not sign?"

Jacintha, with characteristic promptitude, took Riviere's part, without knowing what it was about.

"O, they will sign it fast enough," she cried. "Come to the scratch, my masters!" cried she, cheerfully, and held out a pen.

"*Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! mon Dieu!* but where are we to find a thousand francs?" cried one.

"*Mon Dieu! mon Dieu! mon Dieu!* in your left-hand breeches-pocket," said Riviere, laughing.

"I see it bulge," screamed Jacintha.

Three hands went by a foolish impulse to three breeches-pockets, to hide the swelling. It was too late.

"*Allons!*" cried Jacintha, like a merry trumpet, "come forth, five-franc pieces!"

"It is a sorcerer then!" cried one of the women.

"No, madame," said Riviere, politely, "it is only an observer. You left your dens armed at all points. The first game was to come here and throw dust in mademoiselle's eyes. Had you failed there, the thousand francs was to bribe me to swindle my principals."

"Decidedly he is a sorcerer! My good monsieur, say no more. We sign."

"They sign," said the doctor, "it is incredible." And he joined the ladies, who were walking slowly up and down the Pleasance, abstaining upon a principle of delicacy from interfering with Edouard, but, as may well be supposed, keenly though furtively attentive.

When the farmers had signed, Riviere signed the duplicates.

"Are we not to have your name to it, mademoiselle?" asked a farmer.

Josephine moved toward Riviere, thinking he might require her.

"No!" he cried, haughtily. "*I* have got her name on this authority, but my name is good enough for you. She shall not sign, and you shall not speak to her. You may look at her: that is no small thing. Good! you have looked at her. Now decamp, rogues and jades."

They went off muttering. They felt deeply wronged. Each a shade more so than the other. Rennacon vented the general sentiment of ill usage thus: —

"Cursed be interlopers! Another year or two and I should have put aside enough to buy my farm: it will take me ten years at this rate."

"Come, Jacintha, hold your apron for the bags; lock them in one of your cupboards. Away with you."

Then his friends all came round Edouard, and shook his hand warmly, and thanked him with glistening eyes again and again and again, Laure and all.

Now this young gentleman was so formed that, if one did not see his merit, he swelled with bumptiousness like a peacock, but if one praised him too much, straightway he compared himself with his *beau ideal*, his model, say the Chevalier Bayard, and turned modest and shame-faced: so now he hung his head and stammered as they showered praise and admiration on him. And this was pleasing and pretty by contrast with his late tremendous arrogance and rudeness.

It struck them all.

"No more words," said Josephine, "they make him blush. I crown him. Run, Laure, and bring me some bay leaves."

"No! mesdemoiselles! no! there is more work to be done before I dare triumph. I must take your money down to the town, and pay that creditor off. Then my heart will be at ease about you all, and then I confess I should like to wear a crown — for half an hour."

"Come back to supper, Edouard, and wear it."

"O, thank you."

"There he goes without being measured, the giddy child. Take off your hat, monsieur."

Then there was a mysterious gliding of soft palms and delicate fingers about his brow and head, and the latter was announced to be measured. And O reader, what botheration

might be saved if every man was measured before a crown was clapped on him! He is for a hat.

"They can measure the outside," said the doctor, saucily; "their art goes so far."

Edouard ran off.

"He quits us every minute," said Laure to Josephine; "that is why I detest him."

"You don't detest him," objected the doctor, as gravely as if he was announcing a fact in physics.

"That is why I like him, then," said saucebox.

Edouard ran to Jacintha for two out of the three money-bags, took them home, converted the six thousand francs into bank paper (not assignats), and pelted down to the town.

He went at once to his notary to ask him what forms were to be complied with in discharging the creditor. To this question, asked with eagerness and agitation, the notary answered with perfect coolness: —

"The thing to do *now* is to take the money to the mayor. Perhaps you had better go to him at once: on your return I have something to say to you."

Edouard ran to the Mairie; in front of it he found some forty or fifty idlers collected, and gaping at a placard on the wall.

Edouard's eyes followed theirs carelessly, and saw a sight that turned him cold, and took the pith out of his body.

A great staring notice, the paste behind which was scarce dry, glared him in the face.

"FOR SALE. THE LANDS OF BEAUREPAIRE, WITH THE CHATEAU AND OTHER THE BUILDINGS MESSUAGES AND TENEMENTS.

"AT THE REQUISITION OF JACQUES BONARD, CREDITOR. BY ORDER OF THE DIRECTORY,

"ARMAND, Mayor."

This was the brightest afternoon Beaurepaire had seen for years. These young women, whose lives had so few pleasures, denied themselves the luxury of telling their mother the family triumph. Unselfish and innocent, they kept so sacred a pleasure for their friend.

But, though their words were guarded, their bird-like notes and bright glances were free, and chirped and beamed in tune with their hearts. Their very breath was perfumed gayety and hope.

And the baroness felt herself breathing a lighter, brighter, and more musical air. She said: "Are better days in store, my children? For to-day, I know not how or why, the cloud seems less heavy on us all."

"So it does, mamma," cried Laure. "I smile at Josephine, and Josephine smiles at me, and neither of us have the least idea why, — have we, my elder? and here is your coffee, dear, dear mamma."

"Good! and what an aroma this has too, to-day; and a flavor? if this is from Arabia, what I have been drinking for months must have been a nearer neighbor, I think."

"Let me taste, mamma," said Laure. She tasted and was thunderstruck. She took occasion to draw Josephine into the dark part of the room. "Some one has been drugging my coffee, — it tastes of Mocha, — was it you, love? — traitress, I mean? — tell me, dear."

"No. Guess."

"That is enough, the imp!! I'll."

"I would," replied Josephine. "He said to me, 'Mademoiselle Laure deceives her mother: let us deceive *her*.' I told him I would betray him, and I have kept my word."

"Yes, after cheating me: double traitress!! kiss me, quick! quick!!"

Supper was ready. No Edouard.

His crown of bay leaves was on the table: but no Edouard. They were beginning to fear he would not come at all, when he arrived in haste, and sank into a chair, fatigued partly

by a long day's work, partly by the emotions he had passed through. Through all this peeped an air of self-content.

"Forgive me, madame, — it has been a long day."

"Repose yourself, monsieur," said the baroness, ceremoniously. She was not best pleased at his making himself so at home. "Or rather let us offer you something to restore you."

"Nothing, madame, but a tumbler of wine with a little water, — thank you, madame. Mesdames, great events have occurred since I left you."

"O, tell! tell!" Eyes bright as sword-blades in the sun with interest and curiosity were fastened on him, and their lovely proprietors held their breath to hear him.

He glanced round with secret satisfaction, paused, relished their curiosity, and then began his story.

He told them how he rode down to the town, and went to his notary: here he explained that, being at war with a notary, he had been compelled in common prudence to enlist a notary: and his notary had sent him to the Mairie, and there he had seen a placard offering the chateau and lands of Beaurepaire for sale.

"O Heaven! O Edouard!"

"Be calm, — there, I meant to keep you a moment or two in suspense, but I have not the heart. I went into the Mairie: I saw the mayor: it was Bonard's doing, set on, of course, by Perrin: I paid your six thousand francs into the mayor's hands for Bonard. Here, ladies, is the mayor's receipt; from that moment Beaurepaire was yours again, and that accursed placard mine. I tore it down before all the crowd; they cheered me."

"Heaven bless them!" cried the doctor.

"Dard was there in his donkey cart: he put his cap on his crutch, and waved it in the air, and cried: 'Long live the Baroness and the Demoiselles de Beaurepaire': and they all joined, — aha! — well, as I made my way through the crowd, who should I run against but Perrin!"

"The wretch."

"The pieces of the placard were in my hand: I hurled them with all my force into the animal's face."

"O you good boy!"

"It was the act of a young man."

"You are right, monsieur: I am almost sorry I did it."

"Monsieur Edouard," cried the baroness, rising, the tears in her eyes, "I scarcely understand all you are doing, and have done for us: but this I comprehend, that you are a worthy young man; and that I have not till now had the discernment to see all your value!"

"O madame, do not speak to me so: it makes me ashamed: let me continue my story."

"Yes! but first tell me, this six thousand francs, — O, how my heart beats! O my children, how near ruin we have been, — O dear! O dear!"

"Dear mamma, do not tremble: it is all our own, thanks to our guardian angel," said Josephine. "Edouard, I think our mother wishes to learn how we came to have so much money."

"What, have you not told her?"

"No! Laure said you should have that pleasure: it was your right."

"Ah! thank you, Mademoiselle Laure," cried the young man, very warmly. "Madame, the tenants paid you seven thousand francs to-day for leases at a rent raised thirty per cent from this day."

"Lowered, my child, you mean."

"No, thank you, raised."

"Is it possible? — the good creatures!!"

"Eh? ah! humph! yes!"

"But is it really true? Can this be true?"

"Jacintha holds a thousand francs at your disposal, madame, and this receipt is your voucher for the other six thousand; and the leases signed are in the house."

"And these are the people you had hard thoughts of, monsieur."

"See how unjust I was ! ! !"

"Did they volunteer all this ?"

"Not exactly. It was proposed to them, and within three days —"

"They fell into it ?"

"They fell into it."

"May Heaven reward them !"

"Humph !"

"As they deserve."

"Amen ! amen !"

"Such actions do the heart good as well as the house. I cannot but be affected by the sympathy of these humble people, who have known how to show their good feeling, and, may I venture to say, their gratitude."

"Call it by any fine name you please, madame; they will not contradict you."

"Their gratitude, then, at a moment when it was so needed. After all, the world is not so ill. I seem to have gone back to the days of my youth, when such things were common. Ah ! how happy I am ! and how much I thank you for it, my young friend."

Riviere hung his head.

"May I continue my story ?"

"O yes," cried Laure, "pray go on. I guess you went next to the honest notary."

"The what ? ? ! !"

"The notary that is on our side."

"I did, and what do you think his news was ? That for two days past Perrin had been at him to lend him money upon Beaurepaire."

"And he did not turn him out of the room ?"

"No; he spoke him fair."

"But I thought he was our friend."

"Nothing of the sort. He is our notary. Perhaps all the better servant for having no heart, and therefore no temper. He had been very civil to Perrin, had promised to try and get him the money, and so was keeping him from going elsewhere. Oh ! this glacier gave me wiser advice than flesh and blood could have given. I am never five minutes with Picard, but I come away iced and wiser."

Laure. "And wickeder."

Edouard (with sublime indifference). "Clearly. He said, 'I have a hundred and twenty thousand francs: I will lend you them on Beaurepaire. Go to some other capitalist for a similar sum. The total will pay all the debts. Capitalists will not refuse you: for, observe, this rise in the rents plus the six thousand francs you have paid off alters the face of the security and leaves a fair margin. Get the money while I amuse Perrin with false hopes.' Here was a stroke of policy beyond poor little Edouard Riviere to have invented. Notary cut notary ! ! So to-morrow I ride to Commandant Raynal for a week's leave of absence, and the next day I ride to my uncle, and beg him to lend a hundred and twenty thousand francs on Beaurepaire. He can do it if he likes. Yet his estate is scarce half so large as yours, and not half so rich, but he has never let any one share it with him. 'I'll have no go-between,' says he, 'to impoverish us both'"

"Both whom ?"

"Self and soil, — ha ! ha ! 'The soil is always grateful,' says my uncle, — 'makes you a return in exact proportion to what you bestow on it in the way of manure and labor, — men don't.' Says he, 'the man that has got one hand in your pocket shakes the other fist in your face; the man that has got both hands in your pocket spits in your face.' Asking excuse of you, madame, for quoting my uncle, who is honest and shrewd, but little polished. He is also a bit of a misanthrope, and has colored me: this you must have observed."

"But if he is misanthrope, Monsieur Edouard, he will not sympathize with us, — will he not despise us, who have so mismanaged Beaurepaire ?"

"Permit me, Josephine," said the doctor. "Natural history steps in here, and teaches by me, its mouthpiece, — ahem ! A misanthrope hates all mankind, but is kind to everybody, generally too kind. A philanthrope loves the whole human race, but dis-

likes his wife, his mother, his brother, and his friends and acquaintances. Misanthrope is the potato, — rough and repulsive outside, but good to the core. Philanthrope is a peach, — his manner all velvet and bloom, and his words sweet juice, but his heart of hearts a stone. Let me read philanthrope's book, and fall into the hands of misanthrope."

"He is right, ladies. My uncle will say plenty of biting words, which, by the by, will not hurt you, who will not hear them, — only me. He will lash us and lend us the money, and Beaurepaire will be free: and I shall have had some little hand in it, — hurrah!"

"Some little hand in it, good angel that Heaven has sent us!" said Josephine.

Then came a delicious hour to Edouard Riviere. Young and old poured out their glowing thanks and praises upon him till his cheeks burned like fire.

Josephine. "And, besides, he raises our spirits so: does he not, my mother? Now, is not the house changed of late, doctor? I appeal to you."

St. Aubin. "I offer a frigid explanation. Among the feats of science is the infusion of blood. I have seen it done. Boiling blood from the veins of the healthy and the young is injected into old or languid vessels. The effect is magical. Well, Beaurepaire was old and languishing. Life's warm current entered it with Edouard; its languid pulses beat, and its system swells and throbs, and its heart is warm once more, and leaps with the blood of youth, and dances in the sunshine of hope: I also am young again, like all the rest. Madame the baroness, *gavottons!* — you and I, — tra la la la lah, tra la la la lah!"

Laure. "Ha! ha! ha! Down with science, doctor."

St. Aubin. "What impiety! Some one will say, down with young ladies next."

Laure. "No! That would be punishing themselves. Hear my solution of the mystery. Injection of blood and infusion there is none. Monsieur is nothing more or less than a merry imp that has broken into paradise."

Josephine. "The fine paradise that it was before the imp came. No: it is that a man has come among a parcel of weak women, and put spirit into them."

St. Aubin. "Also into an old useless dreamer worth but little."

Josephine. "Fie then! It was you who read him at sight. We babble, and he remains uncrowned."

Edouard. "No! no! There are no more Kings in France!"

Josephine. "Excuse me, there is the King of Hearts! And we are going to crown him. Come, Laure. Mamma, since monsieur has become diffident, would it be very wrong of us to use force just a little?"

"No, provided monsieur permits it," said the baroness, with some hesitation.

Laughter like a chime of bells followed this speech, and to that sweet music Riviere, spite of his mock dissent, was crowned. And in that magic circlet the young Apollo's beauty shone out bright as a star.

The green crown set off the rich chestnut hair, the shapely head, the rich glowing cheek, and the delicate white brow. Blushes mantled on his face, and triumph beamed in his ardent eyes. He adorned his crown in turn.

"Is it permitted to be so handsome as that?" inquired the baroness, with astonishment.

"And to be as good as pretty?" cried Josephine.

Whilst he thus sat in well-earned triumph, central pearl set round by loving eyes and happy faces that he had made shine, Jacintha came in and gave him a letter.

"Dard brought it up from the town," said she.

Edouard, after asking permission, opened the letter, and the bright color ebbed from his cheek.

"No ill news, I trust!" said the baroness, kindly. "No relation, no friend —"

"No, madame," said the young man. "Nothing serious; a temporary annoyance. Do not let it disturb your happiness for a moment." And with these words he dismissed the subject, and was very gay and rather louder than before.

Soon after he took his leave. He went into the kitchen, and, after a few earnest words with Jacintha, went into the stable and gave his horse a feed.

The baroness retired to rest. In taking leave of them all, she kissed Laure with more than usual warmth, and, putting her out at arm's length, examined her, then kissed her again.

"Stay, doctor," said Josephine, who was about to retire too. "What is it? What can it be?"

"Some family matter," he said.

"No! no! Did you not see what a struggle the poor boy went through the moment he read it; he took off his crown too, and sighed, O so sadly, as he laid it down."

"Mademoiselle," said Jacintha, softly, at the door, "may he come in?"

"Yes! — yes!"

Edouard came sadly.

"Is she gone to bed happy?"

"Yes, dear! thanks to you, and we will be firm. Keep nothing from us."

Edouard just gave her the letter, and leaned his head sorrowfully on his hand.

They all read it together. It was from Picard. Perrin, it seems, had already purchased one of the claims on Beaurepaire, value sixty thousand francs, and now demanded in his own name the sale of the property, upon the general order from the directory. The mayor had consented, and the *affiche* was even now in the printer's hands. The letter continued: —

"*It is to be regretted that you insulted Perrin, at this stage of the business. Had you consulted us on this point, we should have advised you not to take any steps of that sort until after the estate should be absolutely safe. We think he must have followed you to our place and so learned that you are our client in this matter, for he has sent a line to say he will not trouble us, but will get the money elsewhere.*"

"That is what cuts me to the heart!" cried Edouard. "It is I who ruin you after all. Oh! how hard it is for a young man to be wise!"

The girls came and sat beside Edouard, and, without speaking, glided each a kind hand into his. The doctor finished the letter.

"*But if you will send medown the new leases in a parcel, we shall perhaps be able to put a spoke in his wheel still; meantime, we advise you to lose no time in raising a hundred and twenty thousand francs. We renew our offer of a similar sum: but you must give us three days' notice.*"

"Good by, then."

"Stay a little longer."

"No! I am miserable till I repair my folly."

"We will comfort you."

"Nothing can comfort me, but repairing the ill I have done."

"The ill you have done! But for you, all would have been over long ago!"

"Thank you for saying that, — oh! thank you: will you see me off? I feel a little daunted, — for the moment."

"Poor boy, yes, we will see you off."

They went down with him. He brought his horse round, and they walked together to the garden gate in silence.

As he put his foot in the stirrup, Josephine murmured: "Do not vex yourself, little heart. Sleep well to-night after all your fatigues, and come to us early in the morning."

Edouard checked his horse, who wanted to start; and turning in the saddle cried out with surprise: "Why, where do you think I am going?"

"Home, to be sure."

"Home? while Beaurepaire is in peril; sleep while Beaurepaire is in

peril! What! don't you see I am going to my uncle, twenty leagues from here."

"Yes, but not now."

"What? fling away half a day! — no, not an hour, a minute; the enemy is too keen, the stake is too great."

"But think, Ed— Monsieur Edouard," said Laure, "you are so tired."

"I was. But I am not now."

"But, *mon Dieu!* you will kill yourself, — one does not travel on horseback in the dark by night."

"Mademoiselle, the night and the day are all one to a man when he can serve those he loves." With the very words his impatient heel pricked the willing horse, who started forward, striking fire in the night from the stones with his iron heels, that a moment after rang clear and sharp down the road. They listened to the sounds as they struck, and echoed along, and then rang fainter and fainter and fainter, in the still night. When at last they could hear him no more, they went slowly and sadly back to the chateau. Laure was in tears.

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CHAPTER XVI.

The French league in those days was longer than now; it was full three miles English. Edouard baited his horse twenty miles from Beaurepaire: he then rode the other forty miles judiciously, but without a halt.

He reached his uncle's at three in the morning: put his horse in the stable, and, not to disturb the inmates, got in by the kitchen window, which he found left open as in the golden age: the kitchen fire was smouldering; he made it up, and dropped asleep on a chair as hard — as hard as a philanthropist's heart, doctor. He seemed to have been scarce a minute asleep, when Red Indians screeching all around woke him with a start, and there stood his uncle's housekeeper, who screamed again at his jumping up, but died away into an uncertain quaver, and from that rose *crescendo* to a warm welcome.

"But saints defend us, how you frightened me!"

"You had your revenge. I thought a legion of fiends were yelling right into my ear. My uncle, — is he up?"

"Your uncle! What, don't you know?"

"No! how should I know? What is the matter? O heaven, he is dead!"

"Dead? No! Would he die like that, without settling his affairs? No, but he is gone."

"Where?"

"We don't know. Took one shirt, a razor, and a comb, and off without a word, — just like him."

Edouard groaned.

"When did he go?"

"Yesterday, at noon."

Edouard swore.

"O, don't vex yourself like that, Master Edouard."

"But, Marthe, it is life and death. I shall go mad! I shall go mad!"

"No, don't ye, — don't ye; bless you! he will come back before long."

"So he will, Marthe; he must be back to day, — he took but one shirt."

"Hum!" said Marthe, doubtfully, "that does not follow. I have seen him wear a shirt a good deal more than a day."

Edouard walked up and down the kitchen in great agitation. To spirits of his kind to be compelled to be passive and wait for others, unable to do anything for themselves, is their worst torture; it is fever plus paralysis.

The good woman soothed him and coaxed him.

"Have a cup of coffee. See, — I have warmed it, and the milk and all."

"Thank you, my good Marthe. I have the appetite of a wolf."

"And after that go to bed, and the moment your uncle comes I will wake you."

"Ah! thank you, good Marthe. O yes; bed by all means. Better be asleep than twiddling one's thumbs awake."

So Marthe got him to bed; and, once there, Nature prevailed, and he slept twelve hours at a stretch.

Just at sunset he awoke, and took it for sunrise. He dressed himself hastily and came down. His uncle had not arrived. He did not know what on earth to do. He had a presentiment that while his hands were tied the enemy was working.

"And if not," said he, "why, then, chance is robbing me of the advantage zeal ought to be gaining me."

"Wait till to-morrow," said Marthe; "if he does not come I shall have a letter."

Edouard sat down and wrote a line to Doctor St. Aubin, telling him his ill luck, and begging the doctor to send down the leases to Picard, as he had requested.

"Picard is wiser than I am," said he.

The morning came, — no letter. Then Edouard had another anxiety, — he was away from his post. Commandant Raynal was a Tartar. He had better ride over and ask for a week's leave of absence; and now was the time to do it. On his return perhaps his uncle would be at home.

"Yes! I 'll saddle Mirabeau and ride over, then I shall not be twiddling my thumbs all day."

Commandant Raynal lived about half-way between his uncle's farm and Beaurepaire.

As Edouard came in sight of the house a dun pony was standing voluntarily by the door, and presently the notary issued forth, got into the saddle, and ambled towards Edouard. Edouard felt a chill at sight of him, but this was soon followed by a burning heat and a raging desire to go at him like the whirlwind, and ride both him and his beast of a pony into the dust.

He was obliged to keep saying to himself, "Wait a day or two, wait a day or two," and did not trust himself to look at the man as they passed one another.

The other looked at him, though, through his half-open lids, a glance of bitter malignity. Meeting his enemy so suddenly, and at his commandant's house, discomposed Edouard greatly, perplexed him greatly.

"Can these notaries divine one's very plans before they are formed?" said he to himself; "can these practised villains? — no. He has come here simply to do me some general mischief, to set my commandant against me: he has timed the attack well, now that I have a favor to ask him, and he such a disciplinarian."

Edouard came before Raynal despondently, and after the usual greeting said: —

"I have a favor to ask you, commandant."

"Speak!" rang out the commandant.

"A short leave of absence?"

"Humph!"

"On pressing affairs: O monsieur, do not refuse me?"

"Who tells you that I shall refuse you?" asked the commandant, roughly.

"No one, monsieur, but I have enemies: and I feared one of them might have lately maligned me behind my back."

"Citizen Riviere," replied the other, sternly, "if a man came to me to accuse any one of my officers behind his back, I should send for that officer and say to his accuser: 'Now there is the man, look him in the face and say your say.'"

"I was a fool," cried the young man: "my noble commandant — "

"Enough!" said the commandant, rudely. "Nobody has ever said a word against you in my hearing. It is true," he added satirically, "very few have ever mentioned you at all."

"My name has not been mentioned to you to-day, commandant?"

"No! — halt!" cried the exact soldier, "except by the servant who

announced you. Read that despatch while I give an order outside?"

Edouard read the despatch, and the blood rushed to his brow at one sentence in it: "Edouard Riviere is active, zealous, and punctual. In six months more you can safely promote him." This was all: but not a creature besides was praised at all.

The commandant returned.

"O commandant, what goodness!"

"Citizen, I rose from the ranks, — how? — guess!"

"By valor, by chivalry, by Spart—"

"Gammon! — by minding my business: there is the riddle key: and that is why my eye is on those who mind their business, — you are one; I have praised you for it, — so, now, how many days do you want to waste? Speak."

"A few, a very few."

"Are ye in love? That is enough, — you are, — more fool you. Is it to go after *her* you fall to the rear?"

"No indeed, commandant."

"Look me in the face! There are but two men in the world, — the man who keeps his word, and the man who breaks it. The first is an honest man, the second is a liar, and waiting to be a thief; if it is to run after a girl, take a week: anything else, a fortnight. No! no thanks! I have not time for chit-chat. March."

Edouard rode away in triumph.

"Long live the Commandant Raynal!" he shouted. "He is not flesh and blood. He is metal: he rings, loud and true. His words are not words, they are notes of some golden trumpet; and after being with him five minutes one feels like beating all the notaries on earth."

He reached his uncle's place.

"Not come home, Master Edouard."

The cold fit fell on him.

The next morning came a letter from his uncle, dated Paris.

Edouard was ready to tear his hair. "Gone to Paris with one shirt! Who could foresee a human creature going from any place but Bicetre to the capital of the world with one shirt! Order my horse, Marthe. He will turn it, I suppose, after the first week. That will be a compliment to the capital. Ten thousand devils! I shall go mad. Order my horse."

"Where are you going, my young monsieur?"

"To Paris. Equip me; lend me a shirt. He has one left, has he not?"

Marthe did not even deign to notice this skit.

"But he is coming home! — he is coming home!" she cried; "you don't read the letter."

"True: he is coming home to-day or to-morrow. Heaven above, how these old men talk! as if to-day and to-morrow were the same thing, or anything like the same thing. I shall ride to Paris."

"Then you will miss him on the road."

"Give me paper and ink, Marthe. I will write letters all day. Ah! how unlucky I am!"

He wrote a long letter to St. Aubin, telling him all he had done and suffered. He wrote also to the notary, conjuring him again to watch the interests of Beaurepaire keenly while he should be away. Then he got his horse and galloped round and round his uncle's paddock, and suffered the tortures that sluggish spirits never feel and cannot realize. The next afternoon — oh joy! — his uncle's burly form appeared, and gave him a hearty welcome.

The poor boy wanted to open his business at once, but he saw there was no chance of his being listened to, till a good score of farm questions had been put and answered.

In the evening he got his uncle to himself and told him his story, and begged his uncle to advance the two hundred and forty thousand francs on mortgage.

His uncle received the proposal coldly. "I don't see my way to it, Edouard," said he. "I must draw

my money out of the public funds, and they are rising fast. No; I can't do it."

Edouard implored his uncle not to look on it in that light, but as a benevolent action, that would be attended with less loss than actions of such merit usually are.

"But why should I lose a sou for those aristocrats?"

"If you knew them, — but you do not, my uncle: do it for me!— for me whose heart is tied to them forever!"

"Pheugh! Well, look here, Edouard, if you have really been fool enough to fall in love there, and have a mind to play Georges Dandin, I 'll find you some money for the part; but I can't afford so much as this, and I wash my hands of your *aristos*."

"Enough, my uncle. I have not then a friend in the world but those whom you call *aristos*."

"You are an ungrateful boy. It is I who have no friend: and I thought he came to see me out of love: old fool! it was for money, like all the rest."

"You insult me, my uncle. But you have the right. I do not answer. I go away."

"Go to all the devils, my nephew!"

Edouard was interrupted on his way to the stables by old Marthe.

"No, my young monsieur, you do not leave us like that."

"He insulted me, Marthe."

"Ah bah! he insults me three times a week, and I him for that matter: but we don't part any the more for that. He shall apologize. Above all, he shall lend your aristocrats the money. It won't ruin us."

"Why, Marthe, you must have listened."

"*Parbleu!* and a good thing too. You keep quiet. You will see he has had his bark, and there is not much bite in him, poor man, though he thinks he is full of it."

"O my good Marthe, I know his character, and that he is good at bottom, but to come here and wait, and wait, and lose days when every hour was gold, and then to be denied. *Mon Dieu!* where should I come for help but to my mother's brother? Alas! I have no other kindred!"

Marthe prevailed on him to stay.

This done, she went and attacked her master.

"Are you content?" asked she, calmly, dusting a chair, or pretending to. "He weeps."

"Who weeps?"

"Our guest, — our nephew, — our pretty child."

"All the worse for him. You don't know then, — he insulted me."

"To whom do you tell that? I was at the keyhole."

"Ugh!"

"The boot is on the other leg; it is you who treated him cruelly. He weeps, and he is going away."

"Going? Where?"

"Do I know? Where you bade him go!!!!!!"

"That gives me pain, that he should go like that."

"I knew it would, our master, so I stopped him, sore against his will."

"You did well; that will be worth a new gown to you. What did you say to him?"

"I said, 'You must not take things to heart like that; our master is a vile temper —'"

"Ye lied!"

"'But he has a good heart.'"

"You spoke the truth; I am too good."

"'He is your mother's brother,' said I, 'and though he is a little wicked he does not hate you at the bottom. Stay with us, and don't talk about money,' said I, 'that nettles him.' For all that, master, I could not help thinking to myself, we are old, and we can't take our money away with us: our time will soon come when we must go away as bare as we came."

"That is true, confound it!"

"As for my dirt of money, and I have rolled up a good bit in your service, for you know you never were stingy to *me!*"

"Because I never caught you robbing me, you old jade."

"I shall let him have *that*, anyway."

"If you dare to say such a word to him I 'll wring your neck round; who are you to come with your three coins between my sister's son and me? be off and cook the dinner."

"I go, our master."

Uncle and nephew met at dinner: and nephew, after his rebuff, talked anything but money. After dinner, which Marthe took care should be much to his taste, the old man leaned back in his chair, and said with a good-humor large as the ocean: —

"Now, nephew, about this little affair of yours? Now is the time to come to a man for money; after dinner I feel like doing anything, however foolish, to make all the world happy before I die."

Edouard, finding him in this humor, told the story of Beaurepaire more fully, and laid bare his own feelings to an auditor who, partly for good-humor, partly remorse, exhibited an almost ludicrous amount of sympathy, real or factitious, with every sentiment, however delicate, Edouard exhibited to him.

He concluded by vowing they should have the money if the security was sound: "And it must be," said he, "because the rents are raised, and you have paid off one of the mortgages. How long can you give me?"

"O my dear uncle, we may have a deadly enemy. Time is gold, too."

"Let us see: to-morrow is market-day, and the next day is the fair."

Edouard sighed.

"The day after — we will see about it."

Edouard groaned.

"I mean we will go down to the Mairie in my cabriolet."

"Ah!"

"And the money in our pocket."

"Ah! let me embrace you, my uncle."

Thus a term was put to Edouard's anxieties. In three days his uncle would be the sole creditor of Beaurepaire. Still he could not help counting the hours, and he did not really feel safe till Thursday evening came, and his uncle showed him an apoplectic pocket-book, and ordered his Norman horse, a beast of singular power and bottom, to be fed early for the journey.

The youth was in a delicious revery: the old man calmly smoking his pipe: when Marthe brought a letter in that the postman had just left. It was written in a lady's hand. His heart throbbed: Marthe watched him with a smile, and found an excuse for hanging about. He opened it: his eye went like lightning to the signature.

Laure Aglae Rose de Beaurepaire.

The sweet name was on its way to his eager lips, when he caught sight of a word or two above it that struck him like some icy dagger. He read, and the color left his very lips. He sat with the letter, and seemed a man turned into stone, all but his quivering lip, and the trembling hands that held that dear handwriting.

CHAPTER XVII.

Notary read notary. The pieces of that placard flung in Perrin's face were a revelation as well as an affront.

He made inquiries and soon learned the statesman was the champion of Beaurepaire and also a client of Picard. Putting the two together, he suspected his rival had been playing with him. "Picard is playing that young ruffian's game," said he. "Perhaps means to lend him his money instead of me." His suspicions went no further.

But the next day a gossip told him the Beaurepaire tenants had been screwed up thirty pegs.

He saw at once the consequences to the estate. His vengeance would escape him as well as his prize.

He took a quick resolution and acted upon it.

He rode to Commandant Raynal.

That officer, it may be remembered, had months ago given him a commission to buy an estate. He had been looking out for one for him ever since, but unluckily he had not been able to find a bad enough one to suit. An agent looks not to his employer's interest, but his own. The small nominal percentage he receives is a mere blind. He would not give you the detriment of his own judgment for a paltry five per cent. From a pianoforte to a house, and down again to that most despised property, an author's creation, agency is an organized swindle.

Perrin had his eye on Beaurepaire when Raynal first gave him the commission; but he never for a moment intended to get his employer such a bargain as that. He was waiting till some one should have an estate to sell worth one hundred and eighty thousand francs. He would have gone to this man and said, "Now if I get you your money, five per cent comes to me of course." This being assented to, he would have kept quiet awhile: then he would have come back, and said, "I can get you a customer, but you must ask two hundred and fifty thousand francs, — the odd seventy thousand over your price is for me."

This is the principle of agency as practised in France, in England, and above all in Poland, where an apple can't change hands without an Israelite to come between the two silly natives, and pass it across after peeling it thick. But neither in France, England, nor Poland was the principle in all its branches better understood than by this worthy notary.

And to those principles he was now for the first time about to be a traitor. Behold him jogging along on the dun pony, to give his principal the best bargain in the country-side.

A sharp pang of remorse shot through him at the thought: but he never wavered. Fortunately for himself he was not all one vice. He was vindictive, as well as grinding; was capable of sacrificing, not his interest perhaps, but a percentage on it, to revenge. When we are bent on doing a thing we find reasons of all sorts. He said to himself, 'I shall be his steward, his agent; he is a soldier, — never there, — perhaps get knocked on the head, — die intestate, — aha?" In short a vista of possible consequences.

Raynal cut short the notary's glowing description of the unrivalled bargain he had with unexampled zeal and fidelity secured him.

"What is to be done?"

"We must go together to the mayor, at Santenoy?"

"Good."

"How many days shall you require to get your money from your bankers?"

"My bankers? it is all in my knapsack."

"Ah! then we can settle this immediately."

"No! we can't! public business first, private afterwards." He consulted a card. "To-morrow, after one o'clock, I 'm free, — be at Santenoy at three,— will that do?"

"Yes, monsieur."

"Get everything ready: I will ride down by three. How much money?"

"About two hundred and fifty thousand francs."

"I did not ask you about how much!" said the precisian. "I said how much? never mind, I 'll bring enough. Good day."

Next day, at a quarter before three, Perrin was parading in some anxiety before the Mairie. Just at the stroke of three up clattered the commandant in full uniform; off his horse in a moment, and got a boy to hold it. He gave Perrin two hundred and fifty thousand francs, and sent him to the Mairie to buy Beaurepaire while he went to inspect a small barrack that was building in the town of Santenoy.

Perrin went in and had audience of the mayor, and announced a purchas-

er of Beaurepaire: the mayor's countenance fell. He loitered about; was a long time finding this document and that: at last he said, "Have you got the money?"

"Yes!" said the notary, "two hundred and fifty thousand francs. Here they are."

The mayor pottered about again; found a paper; put on his spectacles. "That is not the price," said he; "the estate is worth two hundred and ninety-five thousand francs."

"How can that be, monsieur? two hundred and fifty thousand is the figure on your placard."

"So it is," said the mayor, apologetically. "I ought to have altered it. The order from the directory mentions no sum. It is conceived in general terms: the estate is to be sold for a certain sum, over and above the capital of the rents at twenty-seven years' purchase. Since I put up that placard the rents have been raised: in evidence of which the leases have been sent over to me. Here they are. Since you propose to purchase, you are at liberty to inspect them. For two hundred and ninety-five thousand one hundred and forty francs, the chateau and the estate are yours."

"This is Picard," said Perrin, spitefully.

The mayor affected not to hear him. Perrin went out to tell this rebuff to Raynal. He found him inspecting the barrack. He explained the matter, and excused himself, throwing the blame on the mayor, who, not being a man of business, allowed a placard with false figures to stand upon his wall.

"Well, but," said Raynal, "since it turns out to be worth two hundred and ninety-five thousand one hundred and forty francs, instead of two hundred and fifty thousand francs, all the better for me: it is only paying the odd money."

"But where are we to get it? I would lend it you to-morrow, but to-morrow may be too late."

"O, I have got another fifty thousand francs in my pocket," said the other, coolly. "I brought all I have got; you did not seem very clear how much we should want."

"Come to the mayor, monsieur, at once!" cried the exulting notary: "make haste, or he will pretend it is after office hours."

When the commandant entered, epaulet on shoulder, sword clanking, and laid down the whole purchase-money demanded, the mayor made no further resistance.

He was personally acquainted with Raynal: admired him, stood in awe of him, and of the sword whose power he represented. As for Raynal, he bought the property he had never seen, much as you buy a hot roll across a counter.

From this moment the ancient lands, timber, chateau, fish-ponds, manorial, and baronial rights in abeyance, and the oak-tree that was older than the family itself, belonged to a soldier who had risen from the ranks, and to the heirs of his plebeian body.

"I can sleep there to-night, eh?"

The notary stared, and then smiled: here was a man who outran even his vengeance.

He explained to him that he could not sleep at his own house till he had turned his lodgers out. The law requires that we serve a notice on them.

"Let us go and serve it, then."

"But it is not even drawn up."

"Draw it up."

"And then it has to be engrossed."

"Engross it. I 'll wait here."

"But it must be served before noon of the day it is served on."

"*Sac-r-r-r-r-è!!* dog of a law! that can't do a single thing without half a dozen preliminaries. The bayonet forever. Well, let me see. One of my officers lives near at hand. He is absent on leave. Do you know him? His name is Riviere."

"I know him by sight."

"I'll take possession of his quarters for the night: his landlady knows me."

"Yes! yes!" cried the notary, his eyes glittering with gratified malice.

"Why, he lives close to the chateau."

"Good! then we can sally out on it in the morning."

"Yes! commandant, — yes! You have bright ideas, that is the place to sally from"; and he chuckled fiendishly. "At ten to-morrow I call on you; and we take possession of your property."

"So be it! at ten. Good day. I must go back to the barracks and spur the workmen."

As the commandant went to the barracks, he thought to himself: "'My property,' those words have a fine sound. They ought, too: cost one hundred and fifty thousand francs apiece. By St. Denis I am a fortunate man! there are not many soldiers of my age that can say 'my property,' especially soldiers that have carried a knapsack. How proud my poor old mother would be! Ah! that spoils it all. She will not sit facing me on the hearth. It would be her new house: or our new house. It will only be mine. *Allons!* I am an ungrateful cur to whine. We can't have everything. I 'm not the first to whom prosperity has come a year or so too late. I shall not be the last. Her dream of paradise used to be a house in the country. Duty!" And the sword clanked on the pavement as he walked sharply to spur the workmen, before riding up to his quarters for the night.

CHAPTER XVIII.

After Edouard's departure Josephine de Beaurepaire was sad, and weighed down with presentiments.

"My friend," said she to St. Aubin, "I feel as I think soldiers must feel who know the enemy is undermining them: no danger on the surface: nothing that can be seen, met, baffled, attacked, or evaded. In daily peril, all the more horrible that it imitates perfect serenity, they await the fatal match."

"You exaggerate," replied St. Aubin, soothingly. "We have a friend still more zealous and active than our enemy: believe me, your depression is really caused by his absence: we all miss the contact of that young heroic spirit; we are a body, and he its soul."

Josephine was silent, for she said to herself: "Why should I dash these spirits? they are so happy and confident."

So after that she remained alone in her musings. Edouard had animated Laure and St. Aubin with a courage that withstood the fears caused by the notary's last blow.

As for the baroness, she was like a fading plant revived by showers and sun. The system they pursued with her, which Edouard dubbed reticence, made her a happy old woman. She was allowed to see her own champion's last move, and then the curtain was dropped. This then was to her the whole face of affairs: her rents raised, the only hostile creditor she knew of paid off, a thousand francs in the house, and an ardent youth with the face of an angel added to her family and her heart. Shall I own that even juicy meat and Arabian coffee co-operated with nobler incidents to cheer and sustain her? — no! This refined lady was all soul, — like yourself, Mrs. Reader!

It was a balmy morning, though late in the year; Josephine and Laure had breakfasted, and were walking slowly on the south terrace, by ordinance of physician. Recent events had brought St. Aubin quite down out of the clouds. His attention being fairly awakened to all sublunary affairs on his beat, he now superintended the health of the entire family with extraordinary severity.

Not being an apothecary with drugs to sell, right or wrong, or a physician in league with a retailer of drugs, he prescribed to each of these three ladies every dry day, and to the younger ones every day, a draught of morning

air. He was now waiting in the hall to give the baroness his arm as soon as she should come down.

"What a delicious morning, Josephine! the dear doctor is right; the morning is really a good time to walk, the air seems perfumed."

"Yes, Laure, let us enjoy our home as much as we can, since any day we may lose it."

"Now are you going to begin? — such idle fears! The estate is for sale, but money is scarce. Who can find such a quantity of it all in a moment? Clearly it must be some one who loves us."

"Or some one who hates us."

"O, love is stronger than hate."

"In you."

"In everybody. Here is mamma! here 's mamma!"

Then — how you young people of an unceremonious age would have laughed! — the demoiselles De Beaurepaire, inasmuch as this was their mother's first appearance, lowered their fair heads at the same time, like young poplars bowing to the wind, and so waited reverently till she had slightly lifted her hands, and said: —

"God bless you, my children!"

It was done in a moment on both sides, but was full of grace and piety and the charm of ancient manners.

"How is our dear mother's health this morning?" inquired Josephine.

"You must ask monsieur; he has become tyrannical, and forbids me to have an opinion on such points."

"The baroness is well, mesdemoiselles, but she will be better when she has taken my prescription, — one turn before breakfast and two draughts of you know what."

"Perhaps, since you know everything, doctor, you will tell me how mamma slept?" inquired Laure, a little pertly.

"She slept well if she took what I gave her."

"But did she take what you gave her? — ha! ha! You don't know."

"To ascertain that I must feel her pulse."

"I slept, Laure, and I am sorry I did."

"Ingrate!" said the doctor.

"For I dreamed, doctor, and it was an ugly dream. I was with you all in the garden, on this very spot or near it. But it was not at this time of year, for I was admiring my flowers and my old friends the trees, and the birds were singing with all their might. Suddenly a loud clock struck. I do not know what hour, but it struck a great many times. In a moment flowers, trees, sky, and the light of day were gone. I looked, — I could see no more my beloved dwelling nor my children's eyes. Shall I tell you what it means?" said the old lady, gravely. "It means that I was dead. An ugly dream, my children, — an ugly dream. Again, had it come a month ago, — but now all is so bright and hopeful, I wish to stay with my darlings a little longer."

"It was only a dream, dear mother," cried Josephine, gayly.

"See, here is your terrace and your chateau."

"And here are your daughters," said Laure; and they both came close to her to put their existence out of doubt.

"And here is your faithful though useless old friend."

"Breakfast, madame!" and Jacintha courtesied to each lady in turn.

"Jacintha has turned the conversation agreeably. I was going to cloud you all."

"I now prescribe breakfast, madame, and oblivion of idle dreams. You will walk half an hour more, young ladies."

The sisters took several turns in silence. Laure was the first to speak.

"How superstitious you are, my sister."

"I? I have said nothing."

"No; but you look volumes. I believe in our young madman more than in our dear mother's dreams."

"He will do all he can. Yes! — yes! — I think with you his energy, his spirits, will defeat our enemy."

"Of course they will, Josephine. I am glad you begin to look at things as they are. See how our mother's health and spirits are improving; no wonder, since everything now is bright, — and here comes Jacintha in a wonderful hurry, — mamma wants us. No; how white she is. O Josephine, there is something the matter! Mamma is ill, — her dream!"

"Hush! hush! hush!" cried Jacintha, who came towards them, wringing her hands. "O mesdemoiselles, — O mesdemoiselles, — the chateau! — oh don't let my poor mistress know, — it will kill her. Oh what shall I do? what shall I do?"

"Be calm, Laure, — be calm, Jacintha," said Josephine, trembling all over, except her voice. "Now one word, — oh! my presentiments! — Beaurepaire!"

Jacintha clasped her hands and burst out sobbing.

"It is sold," said Josephine. "Heaven give me wisdom, what shall I do? quick, girl, who to? to that man, — to Perrin?"

"To a stranger, to an officer, a grand officer. Dard told me the very name, cursed be it."

"A Bonapartist! Then we *are* ruined. I have killed my own mother."

"No! no! my sister, — she will faint."

"No! Laure. This is no time for weakness. Come to the Pleasance. There is water there. I love my mother! I love my mother!"

She went with tottering steps towards the pool in the Pleasance, but turning the corner she started back with a convulsive cry, and her momentary feebleness left her directly; she crouched against the wall and gripped the ancient corner-stone with her tender hand till it powdered, and she spied with dilating eye into the Pleasance, Laure and Jacintha panting behind her. Two men stood, with their backs turned to her, looking at the oak-tree: one an officer in full uniform, the other the human snake Perrin. Though the soldier's back was turned, his off-handed, peremptory manner told her he was inspecting the place as its master.

"The baroness! the baroness!" cried Jacintha, with horror. They looked round, and the baroness was at their very backs.

"What is it?" cried she, gayly.

"Nothing, mamma!"

"Let me see this nothing?"

They glanced at one another, and, idle as the attempt was, the habit of sparing her prevailed, and they flung themselves between her and the blow.

"Josephine is not well, my mother. She wants to go in." Both girls faced the baroness.

"Yes, if my mother will go with me," said Josephine.

"Jacintha," said the baroness, "fetch Monsieur St. Aubin. There, I have sent her away. So now tell me why do you drive me back in this way?"

"Did I? I was not aware."

"Children, something has happened"; and she looked keenly from one to the other.

"O mamma, do not go that way: there are strangers in the Pleasance."

"Let me see, — I tell you I will see. So there are. Insolents! Call Jacintha, that I may order these people out of my premises."

"Mother, for Heaven's sake," cried Josephine, "be calm."

"Be calm when impertinent intruders come into my garden?"

"Mother, they are not intruders."

"What do you mean?"

"They have a right to be in our Pleasance."

"Josephine! Laure! oh! my heart!"

"Yes, mother! that officer has bought the chateau."

"It is impossible! *He* was to buy it for us, — there is some mistake, — what man would kill a poor old woman like me! I will speak to this monsieur; he wears a sword. Soldiers do not trample on women. Ah! that man."

The notary, attracted by her voice, came towards her, a paper in his hand.

Raynal coolly inspected the tree, and tapped it with his scabbard, and left Perrin to do the dirty work.

The notary took off his hat, and, with a malignant affectation of respect, presented the baroness with a paper.

The poor old thing took it with a courtesy the effect of habit, and read it to her daughters as well as her emotion permitted and the language which was as new to her as the dialect of Cat Island to Columbus.

"*Jean Raynal, domiciled by right, and lodging in fact at the chateau of Beaurepaire, acting by the pursuit and diligence of Master Perrin, notary; I Guillaume Le Gras, bailiff, give notice to Josephine Aglae St. Croix de Beaurepaire, commonly called the Baroness de Beaurepaire, having no known place of abode —*"

"Oh!"

"*but lodging wrongfully at the said chateau of Beaurepaire that she is warned to decamp within twenty-four hours —*"

"To decamp! Ah! Dieu!"

"*failing which, that she will be thereto enforced in the manner for that case made and provided with the aid of all the officers and agents of the public force.*"

"Ah! no, messieurs, pray do not use force. I am frightened enough already. *Mon Dieu!* I did not know I was doing anything wrong. I have been here thirty years. But, since Beaurepaire is sold, I comprehend perfectly that I must go. It is just. As you say, I am not in my own house. I will go, messieurs. Whither shall I go, my children? The house where you were born to me is ours no longer. Excuse me, gentlemen, — this is nothing to you. Ah! sir, you have revenged yourself on two weak women, — may God forgive you! In twenty-four hours! yes! in twenty-four hours the Baroness de Beaurepaire will trouble no one more in this world."

The notary turned on his heel. The poor baroness, all whose pride the iron law, with its iron gripe, had crushed with dismay and terror, appealed to him.

"O sir! send me from the house, but not from the soil where my Henri is laid! is there not in all this domain a corner where she who was its mistress may lie down and die! Where is the new baron, that I may ask the favor of him on my knees?"

She turned towards Raynal, and seemed to be going towards him with outstretched arms. But Laure checked her with fervor: —

"O mamma, do not lower yourself! Ask nothing of these wretches! Let us lose all, but not forget ourselves."

The baroness had not her daughter's spirit. Her very person tottered under this blow. Josephine supported her, and the next moment St. Aubin came out and hastened to her side. Her head fell back: what little strength she had failed her. She was half lifted, half led into the house.

Commandant Raynal was amazed at all this.

"What the deuce is the matter?" said he.

"Oh!" said the notary. "We are used to these little scenes in our business."

"But I am not," replied the soldier. "You never told me there was to be all this fuss."

"What does it matter to you, monsieur, — the house is yours. To-morrow at this time I will meet you here, and we will take actual possession. Adieu!"

"Good day."

The soldier strode up and down the Pleasance. He twisted his mustaches, muttered, and *pesté*d, and was ill at ease.

Accustomed to march gayly into a town and see the regiment that was there before marching gayly out, or *vice versa*, and to strike tents twice a quarter at least, he was little prepared for such a scene as this. True, he did not hear the baroness's words,

but more than one tone of sharp distress reached him where he stood, and the action of the whole scene was so expressive there was little need of words. He saw the notice given, — the dismay it caused, and the old lady turn imploringly towards him with a speaking gesture, and above all he saw her carried away, half fainting, her hands clasped, her reverend face pale. He was not a man of quick sensibilities. He did not thoroughly take the scene in: it grew upon him afterwards.

"Confound it," thought he, "I am the proprietor. They all say so. Instead of which I feel like a thief, — like a butcher. Fancy any one getting so fond of a *place* as all this."

Presently it occurred to him that the shortness of the notice must have a great deal to do with their distress.

"What an ass that Perrin is not to tell me the house was full of women. But these notaries comprehend nothing save law: women can't 'Left should-der—forward—quick—march!' — like us: they have such piles of baggage, they never can strike tents when the order comes. Perhaps if I were to give them twenty-four days instead of hours? — hum?"

With this the commandant fell into a brown study, a rare thing for him, who had so little time and so much work. Now each of us has his attitude of brown study. One runs about the room like hyena in his den: another stands stately with folded arms (this one seldom thinks to the purpose): another sits cross-legged, brows lowered: another must put his head into his hand, and so keep it up to thinking mark: another must twiddle a bit of string, or a key, — grant him this, he can hatch an epic. This commandant must draw himself up very straight, and walk six paces and back very slowly till the problem was solved: there, — I will be frank, — he had done a good deal of sentinel work: and such is the force of early habits, that when he was not busy, only thinking, his body still slipped back to its original habit.

Whilst he was guarding the old oak-tree, for all the world as if it had been the gate of the Tuileries or the barracks, Josephine de Beaurepaire came suddenly out from the house and crossed the Pleasance: her hair was in disorder, her manner wild: she passed swiftly into the park.

Now Raynal was puzzling himself how to let the family know they need not pack up their caps and laces in twenty-four hours. The notary was gone, and he did not like to enter the house.

"It is theirs for four-and-twenty hours," said he, "and I should be like the black dog in their eyes if I went in." So when he caught sight of Josephine he said: "Ah, this will do: here is one of them, I 'll tell her!"

He followed her accordingly into the park: but it was not so easy to catch her, — she flew. "Want my cavalry to come up with this one," muttered Raynal. He took his scabbard in his left hand and ran after her: she was, however, still many yards in advance of him when she entered a small building which is not new to us, though it was so to Raynal. He came up and had his foot on the very step to go in when he was arrested by that he heard within.

Josephine was praying aloud: praying to the Virgin with sighs and sobs and all her soul: wrestling so in prayer with a dead saint as by a strange perversity men cannot or will not wrestle with Him who alone can hear a million prayers at once from a million different places, can realize and be touched with a sense of all man's infirmities in a way no single saint with his partial experience of them can realize and be touched by them, who unasked suspended the laws of nature that had taken a stranger's only son, and she a widow, — who wept at human sorrow while the eyes of all the great saints that stood around it and Him were dry.

The soldier stood, his right foot on the step and his sword in his left hand, transfixed: listening gravely to the agony of prayer the innocent young creature poured forth within.

"O Mother of God! hear me: it is for my mother's life. She will die, — she will die! You know she cannot live if she is taken away from her house and from this holy place where she prays to you this many years. O Queen of Heaven! put out your hand to us unfortunates! Virgin, hear a virgin! — mother, listen to a child who prays for her mother's life! The doctor says she will not live away from here. She is too old to wander over the world. Let them drive us forth: we are young, but not her, mother, O not her! Forgive the cruel men that do this thing! — they are like those who crucified your Son, — they know not what they are doing. But you, Queen of Heaven, you know all: and, sweet mother, if you have kind sentiments towards me, the poor Josephine, oh! show them now: for you know it was I who insulted that wicked notary, and it is out of hatred to me he has sold our beloved house to a hard stranger. Look down on me, a child who loves her mother, yet will destroy her unless you pity me and help me. O my God, what shall I say? what shall I do? mercy! mercy! for my poor mother, for me!"

Here her prayer was broken by sobs.

The soldier withdrew his foot quietly. Thought he, "It is hardly the part of a man to listen to this poor girl; besides, I have heard enough: her words knock against my breast-bone: let me reflect." And he marched slowly to and fro before the chapel, upright as a dart and stiff as a ramrod.

Josephine's voice was heard again in prayer.

Raynal looked at his watch. "She does not finish," said he, quaintly.

Josephine little thought who was her sentinel before the chapel. She came to the door at last, and there he was marching backwards and forwards upright and stiff. She gave a faint scream and drew back with a shudder.

Not being very quick at interpreting emotion, Raynal noticed her alarm, but not her repugnance: he saluted her with military precision by touching his cap as only a soldier can.

"A word with you, mademoiselle!"

"With me, monsieur? what can you have to say to me?" and she began to tremble.

"Don't be frightened!" said Raynal, in a tone not very reassuring. "I propose an armistice, — a conference."

"I am at your disposal, monsieur," said Josephine, assuming a calmness that was belied by the long swell of her heaving bosom.

"You must not be afraid of me, my young lady, — there is nothing to be afraid of."

"No, monsieur; I am not frightened, — not much frightened, — but you are a stranger to me — and — "

"And an enemy."

"We have no right to hate you, sir. You did not know us. You just wanted an estate, I suppose — and — oh! — "

"Let us come to the point, since I am a man of few words."

"If you please. My mother may miss me."

"I was in position on the flank when the notary delivered his fire."

"Yes."

"I saw the old woman's distress."

"Ah! monsieur."

"And I said to myself, 'This Beaurepaire campaign begins unluckily.'"

"It was kind even to care that much for our feelings."

"When you came flying out I followed to say a word to you. I could not catch you. I listened while you prayed to the Virgin. That was not a soldier-like trick, you will say. I confess it."

"I am not angry, monsieur, and you heard nothing I blush for."

"No! by St. Denis, — quite the contrary. Well, — to the point. Young lady, you love your mother!"

"What has she on earth but her children's love?"

"Young lady, I had a mother; I loved her, my young lady. She promised me faithfully not to die till I should be a colonel, — and she went and died before I was a commandant even; just before, too."

"Then I pity you," murmured Josephine.

"She pities me! What a wonderful thing a word is! No one has been able to find the right word to say to me till to-day. 'Ah! bah!' says one. 'Old people will die,' says another."

"Oh!"

"Take a young one and forget her!' that is the favorite cry of all, mademoiselle."

"Certainly a person of monsieur's merit need never want a young woman, but that is different, — it is wicked to talk so."

"For all that, you are the only one that has said, 'I pity you!'"

"I pity you!" repeated Josephine, her soft purple eye beginning to dwell on him instead of turning from him.

"Shall I tell you about her and me," said Raynal, eagerly.

"I shall be honored," said Josephine, politely.

Then he told her all about how he had vexed her when he was a boy, and gone for a soldier though she was all for trade; and how he had been the more anxious to see her enjoy his honors and success.

"And, mademoiselle," said he, appealingly, "the day this epaulet was put on my shoulder in Italy, she died in Paris. Ah! how could you have the heart to do that, my old woman?"

The soldier's mustache quivered, and he turned away brusquely, and took several steps. Then he came back to Josephine.

"Monsieur," said she, tenderly, "she would have lived if she could, to please you, not herself, — it is I who tell you so."

"I believe it," cried Raynal, a light breaking in on him: "how can you read my mother? you never saw her?"

"Perhaps I see her in her son."

The purple eye had not been idle all this time.

"You are wonderfully quick," said Raynal, looking at her with more and more surprise, — "and what is the matter?" Josephine's eyes were thick with tears. "What? you are within an inch of crying for my mother, — you who have your own trouble at this hour."

"Monsieur, our situations are so alike I may well spare some little sympathy for your misfortune."

"Thank you, my good young lady; well, then, while you were praying to the Virgin, I was saying a word or two for my part to her who is no more."

"Ah!"

"O, it was nothing beautiful like the things you said to the other. Can I turn phrases? no! I saw her behind her counter in the Rue Quincampoix: for she is a woman of the people is my mother. I saw myself come to the other side of the counter, and I said, 'Look here, mother, here is the devil to pay about this new house. Here is the old woman talks of dying if we take her from her home, and the young one weeps and prays to all the saints in Paradise. What shall we do, — eh?' Then my old woman said to me, 'Jean, you are a soldier, a sort of vagabond, though not by my will. But, at least, be what you are! What do you want with a house in France? you who are always in a tent in Italy or Austria, or who knows where? Have you the courage to give honest folk so much pain for a caprice? your fine chateau is n't worth it, my lad, it is I who tell you so. Come now,' says she, 'the lady is of my age, say you, and I can't keep your fine house, because God

has willed it otherwise: so give her my place: so then you can fancy it is me you have set down at your hearth: that will warm your heart up a bit, little scamp, go to,' said my old woman, in her rough way. She was not well-bred like you, mademoiselle. A woman of the people, — *Rue Quincampoix.*"

"She was a woman of God's own making," cried Josephine, the tears now running down her cheeks.

"That she was! so between her and me it is settled, — what are you crying for now? why, you have won the day: the field is yours: your mother and you remain. I decamp." He whipped his scabbard up with his left hand and was off probably for years, perhaps forever, if Josephine had not stopped him.

"But, monsieur, what am I to think? what am I to hope? it is impossible that in this short interview — and we must not forget what is due to you. You have bought the estate."

"True! well, we will talk of that to-morrow: the house to-day, — that was the bayonet thrust to the old woman."

"Ah! yes! but, monsieur!"

"Silence in the ranks!" cried he, sharply: "mind I am more used to command than listen in this district!"

"Monsieur, I will obey you," said Josephine, a little fluttered.

Raynal checked her alarm. "The order is, that you run in and put the old lady's heart at rest. Tell her that she may live and die here for Jean Raynal: above all, tell her about the old woman in the *Rue Quincampoix:* only put it in your own charming phrases, you know."

"Heaven forbid! I go. God bless you, Monsieur Raynal!"

"Are you going?" said he, peremptorily.

"O yes!" and she darted towards the chateau.

Now, when she had taken three steps, she paused, and seemed irresolute. She turned, and in a moment she had glided to Raynal again and had taken his hand before he could hinder her, and pressed two velvet lips on it, and was away again, her cheeks scarlet at what she had done, and her wet eyes beaming with joy. She skimmed the grass like a lapwing, — you would have taken her at this moment for Laure, or for Virgil's Camilla: at the gate she turned an instant and clasped her hands together, to show Raynal she blessed him again, then darted into the house.

"Aha! my *gaillarde,*" said he, as he watched her fly, "behold you changed a little since you came out." He was soon on the high road marching down to the town at a great rate, his sword clanking, and thus ran his thoughts:—

"This does one good, — you are right, my old woman. My bosom feels as warm as a toast. Long live the five-franc pieces! And they pretend money cannot make a fellow happy. They lie! It is that they don't know how to spend it! Good Heavens! one o'clock! a whole morning gone talking."

Meantime at the chateau, as still befalls in emergencies and trials, the master spirit came out and took its real place.

Laure was now the mistress of Beaurepaire.

She set Jacintha, and Dard, and the doctor, to pack up everything of value in the house.

"Do it this moment," she cried; "once that notary gets possession of the house it will be too late."

"But have we the right?" asked St. Aubin.

"Do it," was the sharp reply. "Enough of folly and helplessness. We have fooled away house and lands: our movables shall not follow them."

Having set the others to work, she wrote a hasty line to Riviere to tell him the chateau and lands were sold, and with this letter she ran herself to Bigot's *auberge,* the nearest post-

office, and then she ran back to comfort her mother.

The baroness was seated in her armchair, moaning, and wringing her hands, and Laure was nursing and soothing her, and bathing her temples with her last drop of *eau de Cologne*, and trying in vain to put some of her own courage into her, when in came Josephine radiant with happiness, crying, "Joy! joy! joy!" and told her strange tale much as I have told it, with this exception, that she related her own share in it briefly and coldly, and was more eloquent than I about the strange soldier's goodness, and the interest her mother had awakened in his heart. And she told about the old woman in the Rue Quincampoix, her rugged phrases, and her noble, tender heart: and she ascribed all to the Virgin.

"Heaven is on our side, my mother. Courage, my mother!"

The baroness, deaf to Laure, brightened up directly at Josephine's news, and her glowing face, as she knelt before her mother, pouring the good news, and hope, and comfort, pointblank into her face, as well as her heart. But Laure chilled them both.

"It is a generous offer," said she; "but one we cannot accept."

"Not accept it," cried the baroness, with dismay.

"We cannot live under so great an obligation. Is all the generosity to be on the side of this Bonapartist? — we are then noble in name only. What would our father have said to such a proposal?"

Josephine hung her head. The baroness groaned.

"No! my mother, let house and land go, but honor and true nobility remain."

"What shall I do? you are cruel to me, my daughter."

"Mamma," cried the enthusiastic girl, "we need depend on no one. Josephine and I have youth and spirit, and you have money."

"We have no money. We are beggars!"

"We have a hundred thousand francs!"

"A hundred thousand francs? Are you mad?"

"No, mamma: our debts were two hundred and twenty-five thousand francs. But the estate, owing to the increase of the rents, has sold for two hundred and ninety-five thousand francs."

"How can you know what it sold for?"

"Edouard's letter told us his notary would not let it go for less. Seventy thousand francs, therefore, of the purchase-money is ours. And we have movables worth thirty thousand francs. With a portion of this money, if you will permit me, I will take a farm. By the by, there are one thousand francs in the house, too."

"A farm!" shrieked the baroness.

"Edouard's uncle has a farm, and we have had recourse to him for help."

"Ah! behold the key of the enigma," said the baroness, satirically. "It is the child's lover who has been speaking to us all this time, not herself. A farm-house! I prefer the grave!"

"Better a farm-house than an almshouse," cried Laure, "though that almshouse were palace instead of chateau!"

Josephine winced, and held up her hand deprecatingly.

The baroness paled: it was a terrible stroke of language to come from her daughter.

She said sternly: —

"There is no answer to that. We were born nobles, let us die farmers: only permit me to die the first."

"Forgive me, my mother," said Laure, kneeling. "I was wrong, — it is for me to obey you, — not to dictate. I speak no more." And, after kissing her mother and Josephine, she crept humbly away.

"The moment they have a lover he detaches their hearts from their poor old mother. She is not to me now what my Josephine is."

"Mamma, she is my superior. I see it more and more every day. She is proud: she is just. She looks at both sides. Your poor Josephine is too apt to see only those she loves!"

"And that is the daughter for me!" cried the baroness, opening her arms wide to her.

Josephine nestled to her, and soothed her all day, and kept telling her Heaven was on their side, and she should never have to leave Beaurepaire.

"Let me temporize," thought Josephine, "and keep her happy: that is the first consideration."

The next morning when they were at breakfast, in came Jacintha to say the officer was in the dining-room, and wanted to speak with the young lady he talked to yesterday. Josephine rose and went to him.

"Well, mademoiselle," said he, gayly, "the old woman was right. Here I have just got my orders to march: to leave France in a month. A pretty business it would have been if I had turned your mother out. So you see there is nothing to hinder you from living here."

"In your house, monsieur?"

"Why not? Are you too proud?"

"Forgive us! It is a fault that should not survive our fortunes."

"Well, but — yesterday."

"I have reflected. I was unjust."

"If such an offer was made to my mother, instead of yours, I should not be too proud to take it; but it seems you belong to the nobility. Now I rose from the ranks; so I have no right to be proud."

Raynal said this inadvertently, and in good faith. But the quicker Josephine read it satirically and ironically. She colored up.

"Forgive me, sir, if I have offended you. It was as far from my intention as from your merit."

There was a pause.

"O, your delicacy does not surprise me, neither. I can understand it."

"I am sure you can."

Another pause.

"Confound it," roared Raynal, angrily, "why did I go and buy the house? I did n't want it."

"Some other would have bought it, some one more severe, less considerate, than you, monsieur. I beg you to believe that it is a great comfort to us not to be removed with an unkind hand from so beloved a place."

There was another silence. Raynal was puzzled. He sentinelled Brittany as represented by a bad map that hung on the wall. Josephine eyed him furtively, in secret anxiety, as he marched to and fro.

All this time she had been saying what she felt she ought to say, in hopes that the man would do his part, and pooh-pooh her, and carry out his scheme for her good in spite of her teeth, — her tongue, rather. For to decline the thing we want, and so not only get it but have it forced upon us; the advantage of having it plus the credit of refusing it, is delicious: is it not, mesdames? and well worth risking all for: is it not, mesdames?

Now Raynal was a man, — a creature not accustomed to disguise its wishes, and therefore apt to misinterpret such as do: above all, he was an honest man. A word from him was a thing, the exact thing he meant. So he took for granted Josephine was saying exactly what she meant, and she nonplussed him.

When she saw her success, she wished she had declined more faintly, and the interview was to recommence.

Had it recommenced, she would have done just the same over again: it was not in her blood to do any other. Luckily Raynal's brown study resulted in a fresh idea.

"I have it," said he, "this must be settled by a third party, a mutual friend, some one more skilful than I, and who can arrange this trifle so as not to shock your delicacy. I am no diplomatist."

Raynal interrupted himself by suddenly opening a window and shouting: —

"Halloa! come here, — you are wanted."

Josephine almost screamed: "What are you doing, monsieur; that is our enemy, our bitterest enemy. He only sold you the estate to spite us, not for the love of you. I had — he had — we mortified his vanity. It was not our fault — he is a viper. O sir, pray be on your guard against his counsels."

These words, spoken with great fire and earnestness, carried conviction, and, when the notary came in, the contrast between the invitation that brought him and the reception that met him twenty seconds after was droll.

Perrin started at sight of Josephine, and Raynal hardly knew what to say to him. Whilst he hesitated, the notary, little suspecting what had occurred, began: —

"So you have taken possession, monsieur. These military men are prompt, are they not, mademoiselle?"

"Do not speak to me, monsieur," said Josephine, quietly.

"Why not? We ought to entertain our guests."

"Mademoiselle is at home," said Raynal, sternly; "address her with respect, or she will perhaps order you out."

"She is very capable, monsieur," said the notary, "but luckily she has no one to order."

"Don't be too sure of that," said Raynal.

The notary looked round uneasily, expecting to see young Riviere. He turned the conversation.

"Mademoiselle," said he, in a mere tone of business, "it is my duty as M. Raynal's agent to inform you, that whatever movables you have removed are yours; those that we find in the house upon entering are ours"; and he grinned.

"And as we are not going to enter for a week or two, if at all, you will have plenty of time to shift your chairs and tables," explained Raynal.

"Monsieur," said the notary, "really I do not understand you. Have I done anything to merit this? Have I served you so ill that you withdraw your confidence from me?"

"No," said Raynal, "but you exceed your powers, my lad. I command, — you obey."

"So be it, monsieur. What are your orders, and what on earth is the meaning of all this?"

"The meaning is this. I want mademoiselle and her family to stay here while I go to Egypt with the First Consul. Mademoiselle makes difficulties, — it offends her delicacy."

"*Comédie!*"

"Though her mother's life depends on her staying here."

"*Comédie!*"

"Her pride is like to be too much for her affection."

"Farce!"

"I pitched upon you to reconcile the two."

"Then you pitched upon the wrong man," said Perrin, bluntly. He added obsequiously, "I am too much your friend."

Raynal frowned.

"I will never abet you in such a sin. She has been talking you over no doubt; but you have a friend, an Ulysses, who is deaf to the siren's voice. I will be no party to such a transaction. I will not co-operate to humbug my friend and rob him of his rights."

"Then be off, that's a good soul, and send me a more accommodating notary."

"A more accommodating notary!" screamed Perrin, stung to madness by this reproach. "There is not a more accommodating notary in Europe. Ungrateful man! is this the return for all my zeal, my integrity, my unselfishness? Is there another agent in the world who would have let such a bargain as Beaurepaire fall into your hands? Oh! it serves me right for deviating from the rules of business. Send me another agent — oh!!!!"

The honest soldier was confused

The lawyer's eloquence overpowered him. He felt guilty. Josephine saw his simplicity, and made a cut with a woman's two-edged sword.

"Monsieur," said she, coldly, "do you not see it is an affair of money? This is a way of saying, pay me double the usual charge!"

"And I'll pay him double!" cried Raynal, catching the idea; "don't be alarmed, I'll pay you handsomely."

"And my zeal — my devotion?"

"Put 'em in figures, my lad."

"And my prob— ?"

"Add it up!"

"And my integ— ?"

"Add them all together, — and don't bother me."

"I see! I see! my poor soldier. You are no match for a woman's tongue."

"Nor a notary's! Go to h—, and send in your bill," roared the soldier, in a fury. "Well, will you go, or must I—" And he marched at him.

The notary scuttled out, with something between a snarl and a squeak.

Josephine hid her face in her hands.

"What is the matter with you? Crying again? Well, it is you for crying."

"Me! monsieur. I never cry — hardly. No! I hid my face because — he! he!"

"Haw! haw!"

"You frightened me, monsieur," said Josephine, suddenly assuming a small reproachful air. "I was afraid you would beat him."

"No! no! a good soldier never leathers a civilian, if he can possibly help it, — it looks so bad: and before a lady! You must not think I know nothing."

"I would have forgiven you, monsieur," said Josephine, with tender benignity, and something like a little sun danced in her eye.

"Now, mademoiselle, since my friend has proved a pig, it is your turn. Choose you a friend."

"We have but one fit, and he is so young. Ah! how stupid I am. You know him! Monsieur is doubtless the commandant of whom I once heard him speak with so much admiration, — his name is Riviere, — Edouard Riviere."

"Know him! he is my best officer: out and out."

"Ah! I am so glad. Would it be derogatory on the part of monsieur to admit one so young and in a subordinate position?"

"Ah, bah! It is not I who makes difficulties: it is you. Riviere be it. But where is he? for I have given the young dog leave of absence."

"He is at a farm-house near Rennes, at his uncle's."

"Well, I am going home. I will send him a note. We will confer, and we will arrange this mighty affair. My general would settle a kingdom in the time we take. Meantime tell the old lady to pluck up spirit. My mother used to say, 'A faint heart makes its own troubles.'"

"O what a wise saying!"

"Say we are none of us dead yet, nor like to be, and, mademoiselle, let me hear you say courage?"

"Courage!"

"Yes! only just six times as loud and hearty, 'Courage.'"

"How good he is, 'Cour-age!' — there!"

"Good! on that behold me gone." Clink, clank, clank, clink, clatter, clatter, clank.

Josephine came into the saloon radiant.

"Well! well!" was the cry.

"Mamma, he offered us the house again: I declined, Laure — O yes, I declined firmly."

"Are you mad, my poor Josephine?" cried the baroness, in dismay.

"No, mamma! then he proposed to refer all this to a third person, and he tried Monsieur Perrin. The man arrived just in time to reveal his nature, and be dismissed with ignominy."

General exultation.

"Then he was so good as to let me choose a referee, and I chose Edouard Riviere."

This announcement caused a great sensation.

"He is very young," demurred the baroness, "but you know more of him than I do."

"I know this, that he will not let you be turned out of Beaurepaire!"

"Then I shall love him well."

"Is that a promise, my mother?"

"That it is!"

"A promise made to your Josephine before these witnesses?"

"A promise made to my Josephine," said she; and she looked at Laure.

That young lady kept her eyes steadily down on her work.

The notary went home gnashing his teeth. His whole life of success was turned to wormwood this day. Raynal's parting commissions rang in his ear: in his bitter mood the want of logical sequence in the two orders disgusted him.

He inverted them.

He sent in a thundering bill the very next morning, and postponed the other commission till his dying day.

Edouard Riviere was with difficulty prevailed on to stay the rest of the evening at his uncle's. Sorrow for his friends and mortification at his own defeat weighed him down.

He shook hands with his uncle, and flung himself recklessly on his horse: the horse, being rather fresh, bolted off with him as soon as he touched the saddle.

Some fool had left a wheelbarrow on his road; and just as Edouard was getting his foot into the off stirrup the horse shied violently, and threw Edouard on the stones of the courtyard. He jumped up in a moment and laughed at Marthe's terror; meantime a farm-servant caught the nag and brought him back to his work.

When Edouard went to put his hand on the saddle, he found it would not obey him. "Wait a minute, — my arm is benumbed."

"Let me see!" said the farmer, himself; "benumbed? yes; and no wonder, poor boy. Jacques, get on his horse and ride for the surgeon!"

"Are you mad, uncle?" cried Edouard. "I can't spare my horse, and I want no surgeon: it will be well directly."

"It will be worse before it is better, my poor lad."

"I don't know what you mean, uncle: it is only numbed, ah! it hurts when I rub it."

"It is worse than numbed, Edouard: it is broken!"

"Broken, uncle? nonsense"; and he looked at it in piteous bewilderment. "How can it be broken? it does not hurt, except when I touch it."

"It *will* hurt: I know all about it. I broke mine fifteen years ago: fell off a haystack."

"O how unfortunate I am! But I will go to Beaurepaire all the same. I can have it mended there as well as here."

"You will go to bed: that is where you will go."

"I'll go to blazes sooner."

The old man made a signal to his myrmidons whom Marthe's exclamation had brought around, and four stout fellows took hold of Edouard by the legs and the left shoulder, and carried him up stairs raging and kicking, and deposited him on a bed.

He began to feel faint, and that made him more reasonable.

They cut his coat off, and put him in a loose wrapper, and after a considerable delay the surgeon came and set his arm skilfully, and behold this ardent spirit caged.

He chafed and fretted and retarded his cure. And oh! he was so peevish and fretful. Passive fortitude, he did not know what it meant.

It was two days after his accident. He was lying on his back environed by slops, cursing his evil fate, and fretting his soul out of its fleshly prison, when suddenly he heard a cheerful trombone saying three words to Mar-

the, then came a clink clank, and Marthe ushered into the sick-room the Commandant Raynal. The sick man raised himself in bed, with great surprise and joy.

"O commandant, this is kind to come and see your poor officer in hell!"

"Ah," cried Raynal, "you see I know what it is. I have been chained down by the arm, and the leg, and all, — it is tiresome."

"Tiresome! it is — it is — O dear commandant, Heaven bless you for coming!"

"La! la! la! Besides I am come on business."

"All the better. I have nothing to do — that is what kills me — but to eat my own heart."

"Cannibal, go to. Well, my lad, since you are in that humor, cheer up, for I bring you a job, and a tough one, — it has puzzled me."

"What is it, commandant? What is it?"

"Well. Do you know a house and a family called Beaurepaire?"

"Do I know Beaurepaire?"

CHAPTER XIX.

"A LETTER for mademoiselle."

"Ah!"

"No, not for you, Mademoiselle Laure, for mademoiselle."

"Mademoiselle: Before I could find time to write to our referee, news came in that he had just broken his arm, so I —"

"Oh! oh! dear — our poor Edouard!"

And if poor Edouard had seen the pale faces, and heard the faltering accents, it would have reconciled him to his broken arm almost. This hand grenade the commandant had dropped so coolly among them, it was a long while ere they could recover from it enough to read the rest of the letter: —

"so I rode over to him, and found him on his back, fretting for want of something to do. I told him the whole story. He undertook the business. I have received his secret instructions, and next week shall be at his quarters to clear off his arrears of business, and make acquaintance with all your family, if they permit. "RAYNAL."

As the latter part of this letter seemed to require a reply, the baroness wrote a polite note, and Jacintha sent Dard to leave it for the commandant at Riviere's lodgings. But first they all sat down and wrote kind and pitying and soothing letters to Edouard. Need I say these letters fell upon him like balm?

Next week Raynal called on the baroness. She received him alone. They talked about Madame Raynal. The next day he dined with the whole party, and the commandant's manners were the opposite of what the baroness had inculcated. But she had a strong prejudice in his favor. Had her feelings been the other way, his *brusquerie* would have shocked her. It amused her. If people's hearts are with you, *that* for their heads! In common with them all, she admired his frank and manly sincerity. He came every day for a week, chatted with the baroness, walked with the young ladies, and when, after work, he came over in the evening, Laure used to cross-examine him; and out came such descriptions of battles and sieges, such heroism and such simplicity mixed, as made the evening pass delightfully. On these occasions the young ladies fixed their glowing eyes on him, and drank in his character as well as his narrative, in which were fewer "I's" than in anything of the sort you ever read.

Thus they made acquaintance and learned to know and esteem him.

Josephine said to her mother: "Tell me, mamma, are there many such men in the world?"

"He is charming," replied the old lady, somewhat vaguely.

"He is a man of crystal: he never says a word he does not mean."

"Why, Josephine!" said Laure, "have you not observed he always means more than he says, and does more?"

"I wish I was like him," sighed Josephine.

"No, I thank you," said the baroness, hastily, "he is a man: a thorough man. He would make an intolerable woman. A fine life if one had a parcel of women about one all blurting out their real minds every moment, and never smoothing matters."

"Mamma, what a horrid picture!" cried Laure.

"Josephine," said the baroness, "you are the favorite, I think?"

"O no! mamma, you are the favorite, you know."

"Well: perhaps I am," and she smiled. "But he has already opened the subject with you, never with me."

Jacintha came in and interrupted the conversation: "Mademoiselle, the commandant is in the Pleasance."

"Well?"

"He would be glad to speak to you"

"I will come."

"How droll he is!" said Laure; "fancy his sending for a young lady like that: he is like nobody else. Don't go, Josephine: how he would stare."

"My dear, I no more dare disobey him than if I was one of his soldiers."

"Well go to your commanding officer."

"He comes *apropos*. I was just going to tell you to ask him what Edouard has proposed about Beaurepaire."

"I will try, mamma. But indeed I hope he will speak first, for what else can he want me for?"

After the first salutation, there was a certain hesitation about Raynal which Josephine had never seen a trace of in him before. So to put him at his ease, and at the same time please her mother, she began:—

"Monsieur, has our friend Edouard been able to suggest anything?"

"What, don't you know that I have been acting all along upon his instructions?"

"No indeed! and you have not told us what he advised!"

"Told you? why, of course not,—they were secret instructions."

"And do you mean to obey them?"

"To the letter! I have obeyed one set, and now I come to the other, and there is the difficulty."

"But is not this inverting the order of things for you to obey that boy?"

"A man is no soldier unless he can obey as well as command, and in everything somebody must command. He is very shrewd in these matters, that boy: and my only fear is that I shall fall short in carrying out his orders,—not from want of good-will, but of skill and experience."

Josephine looked thoroughly mystified.

"You see, mademoiselle, it is a kind of warfare I know nothing about."

"It must be savage warfare then?"

"No! it is not. I don't know how to begin: by all the devils I am afraid!" and he stared with surprise at himself.

"That must be a new sensation to you, monsieur! I think I understand you: you fear a repulse, you meditate some act of singular delicacy?"

"No! rather the reverse!"

"Of generosity then?"

"No, by St. Denis! Confound the young dog, why is he not here to help me?"

"But after all you have only to carry out his instructions."

"That is true! that is true! but when one is a coward, a poltroon."

This repeated assertion of cowardice on the part of the living Damascus blade that stood bolt upright before her struck Josephine as so funny that she laughed merrily.

"Fancy it is only a fort you are attacking instead of the terrible me, — he! he!"

"Thank you," cried Raynal warmly, "you are very good to put in an encouraging word like that!" and the soldier rallied visibly. "*Allons!*" he cried, "it is only a fort, — mademoiselle!"

"Monsieur!"

"Hum! will you lend me your hand a moment?"

"My hand, what for? — there," and she put it out an inch a minute.

He took hold of it.

"A charming hand! the hand of a virtuous woman?"

"Yes!" said Josephine, as cool as a cucumber, too sublimely and absurdly innocent even to blush.

"Is it your own?"

"Monsieur!" — she blushed at that, I can tell you.

"Because, if it was, I would ask you to give it me. I've done it!"

Josephine whipped it off his palm, where it lay like cream spilt on a table.

"Ah! I see, you are not free: you have a lover?"

"No! no!" cried Josephine, in distress, "I love nobody but my mother and my sister: I never shall."

"Ah! your mother! that reminds me. He told me to ask her: by Jove, I think he told me to ask her first"; and he up with his scabbard and ran off.

Josephine begged him not to.

"I can save you the trouble," said she.

"O, I don't mind a little trouble. My instructions! my instructions!" and he ran into the house.

Laure came out the next moment, for the soldier had demanded a *tête-à-tête* abruptly.

She saw her sister walking pensively, and ran to her.

"O Laure, he has!!!!"

"Heaven forbid!"

"It is not his fault; it is your Edouard who set him to do it."

"My Edouard? Don't talk in that horrid way; I have no Edouard. You said 'no,' of course."

"Something of the kind."

"Something of the kind! What, did you not say 'no' plump?"

"I did not say it brutally, dear."

"Josephine, you frighten me. I know you can't say 'no' to any one; and if you don't say 'no' plump to such a man as this, you might as well say 'yes.'"

"Indeed I said nothing that could be construed into consent."

This did not quite satisfy Laure, and she dilated on the advantages of a plump "negative," and half scolded Josephine for not having learned to say "no" plump to anybody.

"Well, love," said Josephine, "our mother will relieve me of all this. What a comfort to have a mother!"

"O yes, but why lean on her? You are always for leaning on somebody."

"What, may not I lean on my own mother?"

"No; learn to lean on nobody — but me."

Raynal came out of the house, and walked up to the sisters.

Laure seized Josephine, and held her tight, and cast hostile glances.

"Now hold your tongue, Josephine; you can't say 'no' plump; leave it to me."

"With all my heart," said Josephine.

"Monsieur," said Laure, before he could speak, "even if she had not declined, we could not consent, — so you see."

"I have no instructions to ask your consent," said Raynal, brusquely.

Laure colored high.

"Is her own consent to be dispensed with too? She declined the honor, did she not?"

"Of course she did; but my instructions are, not to take the first two or three refusals."

"O Josephine, it is that insolent boy who sets him on!"

"Insolent boy!" cried Raynal, angrily; "why, it is the referee of your own choosing, and as well-be-

haved a lad as ever I saw, and a zealous officer."

"My friends," put in Josephine, with a sweet languor, "I cannot let you quarrel about a straw."

"It is not a straw," said Raynal, "it is you."

"The distinction involves a compliment. Laure, you who are so shrewd, is it possible you do not see Monsieur Raynal's strange proposal in its true light? This generous man has no personal feeling in this eccentric proceeding: he wishes to make us all happy, especially my mother, without seeming to lay us under too great an obligation. Surely good nature was never carried so far before. Ah! monsieur, I will encumber you with my friendship forever, if you permit me, but further than that I will not abuse your generosity."

"Now look here, mademoiselle," began Raynal, bluntly, "I did start with a good motive at first, that I confess. But since I have been every day in your company, and seen how good and kind you are to all about you, I have turned selfish; and I say to myself, what a comfort such a wife as you would be to a soldier! Why, only to have you to write letters home to would be worth half a fellow's pay. Do you know sometimes when I see the fellows writing their letters it gives me a knock here to think I have no one at all to write to."

"Ah!"

"So you see I am not so disinterested. Now, mademoiselle, you speak so charmingly I can't tell what you mean. Can't tell whether you say 'no,' because you could never like me, or whether it is out of delicacy, and you only want pressing. So I say no more: it is a standing offer. Take a day to consider. Take two if you like. I must go to the barracks. By the by, your mother has consented, — good day."

He was gone ere they could recover the amazement his last words caused them.

"Oh! this must be put an end to at once, Josephine."

"Certainly, — if possible."

"Will you speak to our mother, or shall I?"

"Oh, you!"

"Coward!"

"No, love; but you have always energy and will. I can burst out on great emergencies; but I cannot always be fighting."

"O my sister, and is not this a great emergency?"

"Yes: I ought to feel it one; but I don't, — I can't."

"I can, then."

"That is fortunate. You then are the one to act. You settle it with my mother."

"I will. Well, where are you going?"

"Up stairs, love."

"Wretch! do you think I will go to our mother without you?"

"As you please."

They entered the room, Laure asking herself in some agitation how she should begin.

To their surprise they found the baroness walking up and down the room with unusual alacrity. She no sooner caught sight of Josephine than she threw her arms open to her with joyful vivacity and kissed her warmly.

"My Josephine, it is you who save us. I am a happy old woman. If I had all France to pick from I could not have found a man so worthy of my Josephine. He is brave, he is handsome, he is a rising man, he is a good son, and good sons make good husbands, — and — I shall die at Beaurepaire, shall I not, madame the commandante?"

Josephine held her mother round the neck, but never spoke. After a silence she held her tighter, and cried a little.

"What is it?" asked the baroness, confidentially of Laure, but without showing much concern.

"Mamma! mamma! she does not love him!"

"Love him? Heaven forbid! She

would be no daughter of mine if she loved a man at sight. A modest woman loves her husband only."

"But she scarcely knows Monsieur Raynal."

"She knows more of him than I knew of your father when I married him. She knows his virtues and appreciates them. I have heard her, have I not, love? Esteem soon ripens into love when they are once fairly married."

"My mother, does her silence then tell you nothing? Her tears, — are they nothing to you?"

"Silly child! These are tears that do not scald. The sweet soul weeps because she now for the first time sees she will have to leave her mother. Alas! my eldest, it is inevitable. This is Nature's decree. Sooner or later the young birds must leave the parent nest. Mothers are not immortal. While they are here it is their duty to choose good husbands for their daughters. My youngest chose for herself, — I consented. But for my eldest I choose. We shall see which chose the best. Meantime we stay at Beaurepaire, — thanks to my treasure here."

"Josephine! Josephine! you say nothing," cried Laure, in dismay.

"*Mon Dieu!* what can I say? I love my mother and I love you. You draw me different ways. I want you to be both happy."

"Then, if you will not speak out, I must. My mother, do not deceive yourself: it is duty alone that keeps her silent; this match is odious to her."

"Then we are ruined! Josephine, is this match odious to you?"

"Not exactly odious, mother; but I am very, very indifferent."

"There!" cried Laure, triumphantly.

"There!" cried the baroness, in the same breath, triumphantly. "She esteems his character: but his person is indifferent to her: in other words, she is a modest girl, and my daughter; and let me tell you, Laure, that but for the misfortunes of our house, both my daughters would be married as I was, without knowing half as much of their husbands as Josephine knows of this brave, honest, generous, filial gentleman."

"Gentleman!"

"You are right: I should have said noble, by the heart."

"Well, then, since she will not speak out, I will! Pity me: I love her so. If this stranger, whom she does not love, mamma, takes her away from us, he will kill me. I shall die, — oh!"

Josephine left her mother and went to console Laure.

The baroness lost her temper at this last stroke of opposition.

"Now the truth comes out, Laure, this is selfishness. Do not deceive *your*self, — selfishness!"

"Mamma!"

"You are only waiting to leave me yourself. Yet your elder sister, forsooth, must be kept here for you! — till then." She added more gently, "let me advise you to retire to your own room, and examine your heart fairly."

"I will."

"You will find there is a strong dash of egoism in all this."

"If I do —"

"You will retract your opposition."

"My heart won't let me: but I will despise myself and be silent."

And the young lady who had dried her eyes the moment she was accused of selfishness walked, head erect, from the room. Josephine cast a deprecating glance at her mother.

"Yes, my angel!" said the latter, "I was harsh. But we are no longer of one mind, and I suppose never shall be again."

"O yes, we shall! be patient! My mother, you shall not leave Beaurepaire!"

The baroness colored faintly at these four last words of her daughter, and hung her head.

Josephine saw that, and darted to her and covered her with kisses.

"What have you been doing to your mother, dears? her pulse is very high."

"We had a discussion."

"Then have no more discussions: we have tried her too much with our discussions lately. A little more of this agitation, and I foresee a palpitation of the heart."

"O let me go to her!" cried Laure.

"On the contrary, do pray let her be quiet. I have sent her to lie down till dinner-time. But you really must adopt a course with her, and adhere to it."

"We will, we will. What shall we do?"

"Let her have her own way. She won't be here so very long that we should thwart her. I repent my share in it: my dears, I do not like her symptoms."

"O doctor! my darling mother."

"Depend upon it, her mind is not at rest. She is not easy yet about Beaurepaire. In her heart she thinks she will be turned adrift upon the world some day, and with as little warning as that Satan of a notary gave her: that morning's work has shaken her all to pieces."

Laure sighed, Josephine smiled.

The commandant did not come to dinner as usual. The evening passed heavily: their hearts were full of uncertainty.

"We miss our merry, spirited companion," said the baroness, with a grim look at Laure. Both young ladies assented with ludicrous eagerness.

That night Laure came and slept with Josephine, and more than once she awoke with a start, and seized Josephine convulsively and held her tight.

The commandant did not come for his answer next day, but in his place a letter to say he was obliged to go to head-quarters for two days, but would then return and attack the fort again until it should capitulate. Between the discussion with her mother and the receipt of this letter, Laure had been very sad, and very thoughtful. Accused of egoism! at first her whole nature rose in arms against the charge: but after a while, coming as it did from so revered a person, it forced her to serious self-examination. The poor girl said to herself: "Mamma is a shrewd woman. Am I after all deceiving myself? Would she be happy, and am I standing in the way?" She begged her sister to walk with her in the park, that so they might be safe from interruption.

"I am in deep perplexity: I cannot understand my own sister. Why are you so calm, and cold, while I am in tortures of anxiety? Have you made some resolve and not confided it to your Laure?"

"No, love. I am scarce capable of a resolution, — I drift."

"Let me put it in other words, then. How will this end?"

"I hardly know."

"Shall you marry Monsieur Raynal, then? answer me that."

"I should not be surprised if he were to marry *me*."

"But you said 'no'!"

"Yes, I said 'no' once."

"And don't you mean to say it again?"

"What is the use? you heard him say he would not desist any the more, and I care too little to persist."

"Why not, if he goes on pestering you?"

"He is like you, — all energy, at all hours. I have so little where my heart is unconcerned: he seems, too, to have a wish: I have none either way, and my conscience says 'marry him!'"

"Your conscience says marry one man, loving another?"

"God forbid! my sister, I love no one: I have loved, but now my heart is dead and says nothing: and my conscience says, 'You are the cause of all your mother's trouble: you are the cause that Beaurepaire was sold. Now you can repair that mis-

chief and at the same time make a brave man happy, our benefactor happy.' It is a great temptation : I hardly know why I said 'no' at all, surprise perhaps, or to please you, pretty one."

Laure groaned.

"Are you then worth so little that you would throw yourself away on a man who does not love you ?"

"He will love me : I see that."

"He does not want you, he is perfectly happy as he is."

"Laure, he is not happy : he is only stout-hearted and good, and therefore content : and he is a character that it would be easy — in short, I feel my power here : I could make that man happy : he has nobody to write to even when he is away, — poor fellow !"

"I shall lose my patience, Josephine : you are at your old trick, thinking of everybody but yourself : I let you do it in trifles, but I love you too well to permit it when the happiness of your whole life is at stake. I must be satisfied on one point : or else this marriage shall never take place : I will say three words to this Raynal that will end it. I leave you to guess what those words will be."

"My poor Laure," replied Josephine, "you will not : for, if you do, my mother and Monsieur Raynal will be the sufferers : as for me, it gives me pain to refuse him, but I should have no objection whatever to be refused by him."

"O, this monstrous, this stony indifference ! there, I threaten no more, I entreat : my sister, be frank with me unless I have lost your affection."

"I will speak to you, Laure, as I would to an angel."

"Then show me the bottom of your heart."

"How can I do that ?"

"What do you mean ?"

"I cannot fathom my own heart !"

"Josephine !"

"Yours, love, I can, or our mother's, or Monsieur Raynal's, anybody's, but not my own. Can you yours ?"

"Well ! well ! then don't, but just answer me this, and I 'll read you : if Camille Dujardin stood on one side and Monsieur Raynal on the other, and both asked your hand, which would you take ?"

"That will never be. Whose ? Not his whom I despise. Esteem might ripen into love, but what must contempt end in ?"

"I am satisfied ; yet one question more and I have done. Suppose Camille should turn out to be not quite — what shall I say ? — inexcusable."

"All the world should not separate me from him. Why torture me with such a question ? Ah ! I see — O Heaven ! you have heard something. I was blind. This is why you would save me from this unnatural marriage. You are breaking the good news to me by degrees. There is no need. Quick — quick — let me have it. I have waited three years. I am sick of waiting. Why don't you speak ? Why don't you tell me ? Then I will tell *you*. He is alive, — he is well, — he is coming. It was not he those soldiers saw ; they were so far off. How could they tell ? They saw an uniform, but not a face. Perhaps he has been a prisoner, and so could not write, could not come. But he is coming now. Why do you groan ? — why do you turn pale ? — ah ! I see, — I have once more deceived myself. I was mad. He I love is still a traitor to France and me, and I am wretched forever. Oh that I were dead ! — oh that I were dead ! No — don't speak to me — never mind me ; this madness will pass as it has before, and leave me a dead thing among the living — and so best. O my sister, why did you wake me from my dream ? I was drifting so calmly, so peacefully, so dead, and painless, — drifting over the dead sea of the heart towards the living waters of gratitude and duty. I was going to make more than one worthy soul happy ; and seeing them happy I should have been content and

useful, — what am I now? — and comforted other hearts, and died joyful, — and young, — for God is good: He releases the good and patient from their burdens!"

With this, quiet tears came to the poor girl's relief. The short-lived storm was lulled, and Patience began to creep slowly back to her seat in this large heart.

"Accursed be that man's name, and cursed be my tongue, if ever I utter it again in your hearing!" cried Laure. "You are wiser than I, and every way better. O Josephine, love, dry your tears. Here he comes: look! riding across the park."

"Laure," cried Josephine, hastily, "I leave all to you. Receive Monsieur Raynal, and decline his offer if you think proper. It is you who love me best. My mother would give me up for a house, — for an estate, — poor dear!"

"I would not give you for all the world."

"I know it. I trust all to you. Whatever you decide I will adhere to, upon my honor"; and she moved towards the house.

"Well, but don't go; stay and hear what I shall say."

"O no; the sight of that poor man is intolerable to me *now*. Let me think of his virtues."

Laure was left alone, mistress of her sister's fate. She put her head into her hands and thought with all her soul: —

"What shall I do?"

That now fell on Laure which has in like manner taken by surprise all of us who are not utter fools, — doubt.

She was positive so long as the decision did not rest with her. Easy to be an advocate *in re incerta*, — hard to be the judge.* So long as Laure was opposed she had seen the *cons* only, but now the *pros* came rushing upon her mind.

"What awful power a man has over a woman!! I shall never cure my sister of this fatal passion. A husband might. No happiness for her unless she is cured of it. Our mother prays for it, — he wishes it. She was indifferent, or not averse, before I was so mad as to disturb her judgment with that rascal, whose name she shall never hear again: and she will return to that tranquil state in a day or two. Well, then, — that she should lose me, and I her, for one she does not love, nor he her! How can I decide? and here he is — Heaven guide me!"

"Well, little lady," cried the cheerful horn, "and how are you, and how is my mother-in-law that is to be, — or is not to be, as your sister pleases? and how is *she?* have I frightened her away? There were two petticoats; and now there is but one."

"O no, monsieur! but she left me to answer you."

"All the worse for me: I am not to your taste."

"Monsieur, do not say that."

"O, it is no sacrilege not to like me. Not one in fifty does. I forgive you, haw! haw! we can't all have good taste."

"But I do like you, Monsieur Raynal."

"Then why won't you let me have your sister?"

"I have not quite decided that you shall not have her."

"All the better."

"I dare say you think me very unkind, very selfish, and you are not the only one who calls me that."

"*Selfish?* I don't know what you mean."

"Yes, you do. Oh! you don't think what I must feel, I who love my sister as no man can ever love her, I whose heart has been one flesh

* Were you ever a member of the Opposition, satirical and positive? and did an adroit minister, whom you had badgered overmuch, ever say suddenly to you, with a twinkle in his eye, "You are right, my lads, govern the country"? And on that did your great heart collapse like a pricked bladder? and did your poor little head find out that it is easy to see and say one side of things three-sided, but the hardest thing on earth to balance alternatives, — EH?

and one soul with hers all my life. A stranger comes and takes her away from me as if she was nothing."

"It is too bad!" cried Raynal, good-naturedly; "as you say, I am a comparative stranger: still it is not as if I was going to part you two."

"Not separate us? — when you take her to Egypt."

"I shall not take her to Egypt."

"Yes, you will, — you know you will."

"What! do you think I am such a brute as to take that delicate creature out fighting with me? no, it won't be fighting: you mark my words, it will be hunting Egyptians and Arabs: — why, the hot sand would choke her, to begin."

"O, my good Monsieur Raynal! what, then, you do not tear her from us?"

"No, you don't take my manœuvre. I have no family. I try for a wife that will throw me in a mother and sister. You will live altogether the same as before, of course; only you must let me make one of you when I am at home. And how often will that be? Besides, I am as likely to be knocked on the head in Egypt as not; you are worrying yourself for nothing, little lady."

Raynal uttered the last topic of consolation in a broad, hearty, hilarious tone, like a trombone thoroughly impregnated with cheerful views of fate.

"Heaven forbid!" cried Laure; "and it will, for I shall pray for you now. Ah! monsieur, forgive me!"

"Yes, I forgive you, — stop! what am I forgiving you for?"

"What for? why, for not seeing all your worth: of course I knew you were an angel, but I had no idea you were a duck. You are just the man for my sister. She likes to obey: you are all for commanding. So you see. Then she never thinks of herself: any other man but you would impose on her good-nature; but you are too generous to do that. So you see. Then she esteems you so highly."

"Brief, you are her plenipotentiary, and you say 'yes.'"

"Why should I say 'no'? you will make one another happy some day: you are both so good. Any other man but you would tear her from me; but you are too just, too kind. Heaven will reward you. No! I will. I will give you Josephine: ah, my dear brother-in-law, I give you there the most precious thing I have in the world."

"Thank you, then. So that is settled. Hum! no, it is not quite: I forgot: I have something for you to read: an anonymous letter. I got it this morning: it says your sister has a lover, — read it."

The letter ran to this tune: a friend who had observed the commandant's frequent visits at Beaurepaire wrote to warn him against traps. Both the young ladies of Beaurepaire were doubtless at the new proprietor's service to pick and choose from. But for all that each of them had a lover, and, though these lovers had their orders to keep out of the way till monsieur should be hooked, he might be sure that, if he married either, the man of her heart would come on the scene soon after, perhaps be present at the wedding.

In short, it was one of those poisoned arrows a coarse vindictive coward can shoot.

It was the first anonymous letter Laure had ever seen. It almost drove her mad on the spot. Raynal was sorry he had let her see it.

She turned red and white by turns, and gasped for breath.

"O, why am I not a man? — why don't I wear a sword. I would pass it through this caitiff's heart. The cowardly slave! — the fiend! for who but a fiend could slander an angel like my Josephine? Hooked? O, she will never marry you if she sees this."

"Then don't let her see it, and don't take it to heart like that. I don't trust to the word of a thief, who owns that his story is a thing he dare

not sign his name to; at all events I shall not put his word against yours. But this is why I put the question to you. I am an honest man, but not a *complaisant* one. I should not be an easy-going husband like some I see about. I'd have no wasps round my honey. If my wife took a lover I would not lecture the woman,— what is the use? I'd kill the man then and there; I'd kill him in doors or out; I'd kill him as I would kill a snake. If she took another I'd send him after the first, and so on till one killed me."

"And serve the wretches right."

"Yes, but, for my own sake, I don't choose to marry a woman that loves any other man. So tell me, come."

"Monsieur, the letter is a wicked slander. I have no lover. I have a young fool that comes and teases me: but it is no secret. He is away, but why? He is on a sick-bed, poor little fellow."

"But your sister?"

"My sister? ask my mother whether she has a lover."

"What for? I ask you. She would not have a lover unknown to you."

"I defy her. Well, monsieur, I have not seen her speak three words to any young man except Monsieur Riviere this three years past."

"That is enough"; and he tore the letter quietly to atoms.

Then Laure saw she could afford a little more candor: —

"Understand me, I can't speak of what happened when I was a child. But if ever she had a girlish attachment, he has not followed it up, or surely I should have seen something of him all these years."

"*Parbleu* — O, as for flirtations, let them pass: a lovely girl does not grow up without one or two whispering some nonsense into her ear. Why, I myself should have flirted often, but I never had the time. Bonaparte gives you time to eat and drink, but not to sleep or flirt, and that reminds me I have fifty miles to ride; so good by, sister-in-law, eh?"

"Adieu, brother-in-law."

Left alone, Laure had some misgivings. She had equivocated with one whose upright, candid nature ought to have protected him: but an enemy had accused Josephine; and it came so natural to shield her. "Did he really think I would expose my own sister?" said she to herself, angrily. Was not this anger secret self-discontent?

Laure was coming round a little to the match before this brisk interview with Raynal. His promise not to take Josephine to Egypt turned the scale. The anonymous letter, too, fired her with anger and resistance. "So we have an enemy who tries to hinder him from marrying her!!!"

Irresolution was no part of this young lady's character. She did not decide blindly in so important a matter; but, her decision once made, she banished objections and misgivings: the time for them was gone by, they had had their hearing.

She went to Josephine.

"Well, love," said Josephine, "have you dismissed him?"

"No."

Josephine smiled feebly. "It is easy to say, 'say no': but it is not so easy to say 'no,' especially when you feel you ought to say 'yes,' and have no wish either way except to give pleasure to others."

"But I am not such skim-milk," replied Laure: "I have always a strong wish where you are concerned, and your happiness. I hesitated whilst I was in doubt: but I doubt no longer: I have had a long talk with him: he has shown me his whole heart: he is the best, the noblest of creatures: he has no littleness or meanness. Also he is a thorough man; I know that by his being the very opposite of a woman in his ways: now you are a thorough woman, and you will suit one another to a T. I have decided, my Josephine: no more doubts, love: no more tears: no more disputes: we are all of one mind."

"All the better."

"Embrace me, I love you! O, never sister loved sister as I you: I have secured your happiness."

"Never mind my happiness, think of our mother, think of—"

"Your happiness is before all. It will come! not all in a day perhaps, but it will come. So then in one little fortnight my sister—ah!—you marry Monsieur Raynal."

"You have settled it?"

"Yes."

"What,—finally?"

"Yes."

"But are you sure I can make him as happy as he deserves?"

"Positive."

"I think so to; still—"

"It is settled, dear," said Laure, soothingly.

"O the comfort of that,—you relieve me of a weight."

"It is settled, love, and by me."

"Then I am at peace. You are my best friend. I shall have duties; I shall do some good in the world. They were all for it but you before."

"And now I am stronger for it than any one. It is settled."

"Bless you, dear Laure,—you have saved your sister. O CAMILLE,—CAMILLE!—WHY HAVE YOU ABANDONED ME!"

She fell to sobbing terribly. Laure wept on her neck, but said nothing. She too was a woman, and felt those despairing words were the woman's consent to marry him she esteemed but did not love. It was the last despairing cry of love giving up a hopeless struggle.

And in fact these were the last words that passed between the sisters.

It was settled.

And now Jacintha came to tell them it was close upon dinner-time.

They hastened to dry their tears and wash their red eyes, for fear their mother should see what they had been at, and worry herself.

"Well, mademoiselle, these two consent; but what do you say? for, after all, it is you I am courting, and not them. Have you the courage to venture on a rough soldier like me?"

"Speak, Josephine," said the baroness.

For this delicate question was put plump before the three ladies.

"Monsieur," said Josephine, timidly, "I will be as frank, as straightforward, as you are. I thank you for the honor you do me."

Raynal looked perplexed.

"Mother-in-law? does that mean yes or no?"

"I did not hear the word 'no,' did you?"

"Not downright 'no'!"

"Then she means 'yes.'"

"Then I am very much obliged to her."

"You have little reason to be, monsieur."

"Yes, he has!" cried the baroness, "and so have you, my beloved child; my brave soldier, I would have selected you for a son out of all the nation."

"And I never saw an old lady, but one, that suited me for a mother like you."

"You have but one fault: you never can stay quietly and chat."

"That is Bonaparte's fault. I have got to go to him at Paris tomorrow."

"So soon? but you stay with us this evening; I insist on it. I shall be hurt else."

"All the evening. And just now I want to say something to you that I don't wish those two to hear, mother!"

"That is a hint, my young ladies," said the baroness.

"And a pretty broad one," said Laure, with a toss.

The details of this conversation between the baroness and Raynal did not transpire: but it left the baroness very happy, and at the same time much affected.

"He is an angel, my dears," cried

she: "he thinks of everything. I shall love all brusque people; and once I held them in such aversion. You are a happy girl, Josephine, and I am a happy old woman."

Josephine brightened up at the old lady's joy, then she turned quickly to examine Laure; Laure's face beamed with unaffected happiness.

"Ah!" said Josephine, complacently. She added, "And what a comfort to be all of one mind."

The wedding was fixed for that day fortnight.

The next morning wardrobes were ransacked. The silk, muslin, and lace of their prosperous days were looked out: grave discussions were held over each work of art.

Laure was active, busy, fussy.

The baroness threw in the weight of her judgment and experience.

Josephine smiled whenever either Laure or the baroness looked at all fixedly at her.

So glided the peaceful days. So Josephine drifted towards the haven of wedlock.

CHAPTER XX.

At Bayonne, a garrison town on the south frontier of France, two sentinels walked lethargically, crossing and recrossing before the governor's house. Suddenly their official drowsiness burst into energy; they lowered their pieces and crossed them with a clash before the gateway. A pale, grisly man, in rusty, defaced, dirty, and torn regimentals, was walking into the court-yard really as if it belonged to him. The battered man did not start back.

He stopped and looked down with a smile at the steel barrier the soldiers had improvised for him, then drew himself a little up, carried his hand carelessly to his cap, which was nearly in two, and gave the name of an officer in the French army.

If you or I, dressed like a beggar, who years ago had stolen regimentals and worn them down to civil garments, had addressed these soldiers with these very same words, the bayonets would have kissed closer, or perhaps the points been turned against our sacred but rusty person; but there is a freemasonry of the sword: the light, imperious hand that touched that battered cap, and the quiet, clear tone of command, told.

The soldiers slowly recovered their pieces, but still looked uneasy and doubtful in their minds. The battered one saw this, and gave a sort of lofty smile; he turned up his cuffs and showed his wrists, and drew himself still higher.

The sentinels shouldered their pieces sharp, then dropped them simultaneously with a clatter and ring upon the pavement.

"Pass, captain."

The battered, rusty figure rang the governor's bell. A servant came and eyed him with horror and contempt. He gave his name, and begged to see the governor.

The servant left him in the hall, and went up stairs to tell his master. At the name the governor reflected, then frowned, then bade his servant reach him down a certain book. He inspected it. "I thought so: any one with him?"

"No, monsieur the governor."

"Load my pistols, put them on the table, put that book back, show him in, and then order a guard to the door."

The governor was a stern veteran, with a powerful brow, a shaggy eyebrow, and a piercing eye. He never rose, but leaned his chin on his hand, and his elbow on a table that stood between them, and eyed the newcomer very fixedly and strangely.

"We did not expect to see you on this side the Pyrenees."

"Nor I myself, governor."

"What do you come to me for?"

"A welcome, a suit of regimentals, and money to take me to Paris."

"And suppose, instead of that, I turn out a corporal's guard, and bid them shoot you in the court-yard?"

"It would be the drollest thing you ever did, all things considered," said the other, coolly, but he looked a little surprised.

The governor went for the book he had lately consulted, found the page, handed it to the rusty officer, and watched him keenly. The blood rushed all over his face, and his lip trembled; but his eye dwelt stern yet sorrowful on the governor.

"I have read your book: now read mine." He drew off his coat, and showed his wrists and arms, blue and whaled. "Can you read that, monsieur?"

"No!"

"All the better for you: Spanish fetters, general." He showed a white scar on his shoulder. "Can you read that, sir?"

"Humph?"

"This is what I cut out of it," and he handed the governor a little round stone as big and almost as regular as a musket-ball.

"Humph! That could hardly have been fired from a French musket."

"Can you read this?" and he showed him a long cicatrix on his other arm.

"Knife, I think," said the governor.

"You are right, monsieur: Spanish knife! Can you read this?" and opening his bosom he showed a raw and bloody wound on his breast.

"O, the devil!" cried the general.

The wounded man put his rusty coat on again, and stood erect and haughty and silent.

The general eyed him, and saw his great spirit shining through this man. The more he looked the less could the scarecrow veil the hero from his practised eye.

"There has been some mistake, or else I dote, and can't tell a soldier from a —"

"Don't say the word, old man, or your heart will bleed."

"Humph! I must go into this matter at once. Be seated, captain, if you please, and tell me what have you been doing all these years?"

"Suffering."

"What, all the time?"

"Without intermission!"

"But what? suffering what?"

"Cold, hunger, darkness, wounds, solitude, sickness, despair, prison, all that man can suffer."

"Impossible; a man would be dead at that rate before this."

"I should have died a dozen times, but for one thing."

"Ay! what was that?"

"I had promised to live."

There was a pause. Then the old man said calmly, "To the facts, young man: I listen."

An hour had scarce elapsed since the rusty figure was stopped by the sentinels at the gate, when two glittering officers passed out under the same archway, followed by a servant carrying a furred cloak. The sentinels presented arms. The elder of these officers was the governor: the younger was the late scarecrow, in a bran-new uniform belonging to the governor's son. He shone out now in his true light: the beau ideal of a patrician soldier; one would have said he had been born with a sword by his side and drilled by Nature, so straight and smart yet easy he was in every movement. He was like a falcon, eye and all, only, as it were, down at the bottom of the hawk eye seemed to lie a dove's eye. That wonderful compound and varying eye seemed to say: I can love, I can fight; I can fight, I can love, as few of you can do either.

The old man was trying to persuade him to stay at Bayonne, until his wound should be cured.

"No, general, I have other wounds to cure of longer standing than this one."

"Paris is a long journey for a wounded man."

"Say a scratched man, general."

"Well, promise me to stay a month at Paris?"

"General, I shall stay an hour in Paris."

"An hour in Paris!" Well, at

least call at the War Office and present this letter."

"I will."

That same afternoon, wrapped in the governor's furred cloak, the young officer lay at his full length in the *coupé* of the diligence, the whole of which the governor had peremptorily demanded for him, and rolled day and night towards Paris.

He reached it worn with fatigue and fevered by his wound, but his spirit as indomitable as ever. He went to the War Office with the governor's letter. It seemed to create some little sensation: one functionary came and said a polite word to him, then another. At last, to his infinite surprise, the minister himself sent down word he wished to see him; the minister put several questions to him, and seemed interested in him and touched by his relation.

"I think, captain, I shall have to send to you: where do you stay in Paris?"

"Nowhere, monsieur, — I leave Paris as soon as I can find an easy-going horse."

"But General Bertaux tells me you are wounded."

"A little."

"Pardon me, captain, but is this prudent? is it just to yourself and your friends?"

"Yes, monsieur, I owe it to those who perhaps think me dead."

"You can write to them."

"I grudge so great, so sacred a joy to a letter. No! after all I have suffered I claim to be the one to tell her I have kept my word: I promised to live, and I live."

"Her? I say no more, captain, — only tell me what road you take."

"The road to Brittany."

As the young officer was walking his horse by the roadside about a league and a half from Paris, he heard a clatter behind him, and up galloped an *aide-de-camp*, and drew up alongside, bringing his horse nearly on his haunches.

He handed him a large packet sealed with the arms of France. The other tore it open and there was his brevet as colonel. His cheek flushed, and his eye glittered with joy. The *aide-de-camp* next gave him a parcel.

"Your epaulets, colonel! We hear you are going into the wilds where epaulets don't grow. You are to join the army of the Rhine as soon as your wound is well."

"Wherever my country calls me."

"Your address, then, colonel, that we may know where to put our finger on a hero when we want one."

"I am going to Beaurepaire."

"Ah! Beaurepaire? I never heard of it."

"You never heard of Beaurepaire? Beaurepaire is in Brittany, twenty-five leagues from Paris, twenty-three leagues and a half from here."

"Good! Health and honor to you, colonel."

"The same to you, monsieur, — or a soldier's death."

The new colonel read the precious document across his horse's mane, and then he was going to put one of the epaulets on his right shoulder, bare at present: but he reflected.

"No; I will not crown myself. She shall make me a colonel with her own dear hand. I will put them in my pocket. I will not even look at them till she has seen them; I have no right. O how happy I am, not only to come back to her alive, but to come back to her honored."

His wound smarted, his limbs ached, but no pain past or present could lay hold of his mind. In his great joy he remembered past suffering and felt present pain — and smiled.

Only every now and then he pined for wings.

O the weary road!

He was walking his horse quietly, drooping a little over his saddle, when another officer well mounted came after him and passed him at a hand

gallop with one hasty glance at his uniform, and went tearing on like one riding for his life.

"Don't I know that face?" said he.

He cudgelled his memory, and at last he remembered it was the face of an old comrade. They had been lieutenants together.

"It *was* Raynal," said he, "only bronzed by service in some hot country. No wonder he did not know me. I must be more changed still. I wish I had hailed the fellow. Perhaps I shall fall in with him again at the next town."

He touched his horse with the spur, and cantered gently on, for trotting shook him more than he could bear. Even when he cantered he had to press his hand against his bosom, and often with the motion a bitterer pang than usual came and forced the water from his eyes; and then he smiled.

His great love and his high courage made this reply to the body's idle anguish. And still his eyes looked straight forward as at some object in the distant horizon, while he came gently on, his hand pressed to his bosom, his head drooping now and then, smiling patiently upon the road to Beaurepaire.

CHAPTER XXI.

At Beaurepaire they were making and altering wedding dresses. Laure was excited, and even Josephine took a calm interest. Dress never goes for nothing with her sex. The chairs and tables were covered with dresses, and the floor was littered.

"I wish you would think more of what you are to wear."

"Of course you do," said Laure; "but that is selfish of you. You always want to have your own way, and your way is to be thinking of everybody before Josephine; but you shall not have your own way whilst I am here, because I am the mistress."

"Nobody disputes that, love!"

"All the better for them, dear. Now, dear, you really must work harder. It only wants five days to the wedding, and see what oceans we have to do!"

It was three o'clock in the afternoon: the baroness had joined her daughters, and was presiding over the rites of vanity, and telling them what she wore at her wedding, under Louis XV., with strict accuracy, and what we men should consider a wonderful effort of memory, when the Commandant Raynal came in like a cannon-ball, without any warning, and stood among them in a stiff military attitude. Exclamations from all the party, and then a kind greeting, especially from the baroness.

"We have been so dull without you, Jean."

"And I have missed you once or twice, mother-in-law, I can tell you. Well, mother-in-law, I am afraid I shall vex you, but you must consider we live in a busy time. To-morrow I start for Egypt!"

"Oh!" cried Laure.

"To-morrow!" cried the baroness.

Josephine put down her work quietly.

"Yes, it is all altered. Bonaparte leaves Paris the day after to-morrow at seven in the morning, and I go with him. I rode back here as fast as I could to spend what little time is left with you."

The ladies' eyes all telegraphed one another in turn.

"My horse is a good one. If I start to-morrow at noon I shall be at Paris by five in the morning, — must be with Bonaparte at half past five."

The baroness sighed deeply, and the tears came into her eyes.

"Just as we were all beginning to know and love you."

"Oh! you must not be downhearted, old lady. Why, I am as

likely to come back from Egypt as not. It is an even chance, to say the least."

This piece of consolation completed the baroness's unhappiness. She really had conceived a great affection for Raynal, and her heart had been set on the wedding.

These her motives were mixed; and so, by the by, are yours and mine, in nearly all we do, — good, bad, or indifferent.

"Take away all that finery, girls," said she, bitterly, "we shall not want it for years. Ah! my friend, I shall not be alive when you come home from Egypt. I shall never have a son!"

"What do you mean?" said Raynal, a little roughly. "It will be your own fault if you don't have a son; it shall not be mine."

"I should rather ask, what do you mean? You will be my friend and the betrothed of my daughter. But consider; but for this *contretemps* you really would have belonged to me in a few days' time. I should have had the right to put my finger on you and say, 'This is my son.' Alas! that name had become dear to me. I never had a son, — only daughters, — the best any woman ever had; but one is not complete without a son, and I shall never live to have one."

Raynal looked puzzled. The young ladies were putting away the wedding things.

"I hate General Bonaparte," said Laure, viciously.

"Hate my general?" groaned Raynal, looking down with a sort of superstitious awe and wonder at the lovely vixen. "Hate the best soldier the world ever saw?"

"What do I care for his soldiership. He has put off our wedding. For how many years did you say?"

"No; he has put it on."

"And after me working my finger to the bone — put it on — what do you mean?"

"I mean the wedding was to be in a week, and now it is to be to-morrow at ten o'clock; that is putting it on, I call."

The three ladies set up their throats together.

"To-morrow?"

"To-morrow. Why, what do you suppose I left Paris for yesterday? left my duties even."

"What, monsieur?" asked Josephine, timidly, "did you ride all that way, and leave your duties, merely to marry me?" and she looked a little pleased.

"You are worth a great deal more trouble than that," said Raynal, simply. "Besides, I had passed my word, and I always keep my word."

"So do I, monsieur," said Josephine, a little proudly. "I will not go from it now, if you insist; but I confess to you that such a proposal staggers me; so sudden, — no preliminaries, — no time to reflect; in short, there are so many difficulties that I must request of your courtesy to reconsider."

"Difficulties," shouted Raynal, with merry disdain; "there are none unless you sit down and make them: difficulties?? ha! ha! we do more difficult things than this every day of our lives: we passed the bridge of Arcola in thirteen minutes: and we had not the consent of the enemy: as we have now, mademoiselle, — have we not?"

"Monsieur, it seems ungracious in me to raise objections, when you have taken so much trouble, — but — mamma!!"

"Yes, my daughter: my dear friend, you do us both great honor by this *empressement:* but I see no possibility: there is an etiquette we cannot altogether defy: there are preliminaries before a daughter of the Baron de Beaurepaire —"

"There used to be all that, madame!" laughed Raynal, putting her down good-humoredly, "but it was in the days when armies came out and touched their caps to one another, and went back into winter quarters. Then the struggle was who could go slowest: now the fight is who can go

fastest. Time and Bonaparte wait for nobody: and ladies and other strong places are taken by storm, not undermined a foot a month as under Noah Quatorze: let me cut this short as time is short: mademoiselle, you say you are a woman of your word, and that if I insist you will give in: well, I insist!"

"In that case, monsieur, all is said: I shall not resist you."

"It would be no use," cried Laure, clapping her hands, "the man is irresistible."

"You will not resist? that is all I require: now don't worry yourself: don't fancy diffieulties: don't trouble yourself. I undertake everything: you will not have to lift a finger except to sign the marriage contract. As the time is short I cut it into rations beforehand: the carriages will be here at nine: they will whisk us down to the mayor's house by a quarter to ten: Picard the notary meets us there with the marriage contract to save time: the contract signed, the mayor will do the marriage at quick step out of respect for me and to save time, — half an hour, — quarter past ten: breakfast all in the same house an hour and a quarter: — we must n't hurry a wedding breakfast, — then ten minutes or so for the old fogies to waste in making speeches about our virtues, mademoiselle, — yours and mine; my answer ten seconds, — my watch will come out, — my charger will come round, — I rise from the table, — embrace my dear old mother, — kiss my wife's hand, — into the saddle, — canter to Paris, — roll to Toulon, — sail to Egypt. But I shall leave a Madame Raynal and a mother behind me: they will both send me a kind word now and then; and I will write letters to you all from Egypt, and when I come home my wife and I will make acquaintance, and we will all be happy together: and if I am killed out there don't you go and fret your poor little hearts about it: it is a soldier's lot, sooner or later. Besides, you will find I have taken care of you: my poor women, Jean Raynal's hand won't let any skulking thief come and turn you out of your quarters, even though Jean Raynal should be dead. I have got to meet Picard at Riviere's on that very business, — I am off."

He was gone as brusquely as he came.

"My mother! my sister!" cried Josephine, "help me to love this man."

"You need no help!" cried the baroness, with enthusiasm; "not love him, — we should all be monsters."

Raynal came to supper, looking bright and cheerful.

"No more work to-day. I have nothing to do but talk, fancy that."

There is no time to relate a tithe of what they said to one another; I select the most remarkable thing.

Josephine de Beaurepaire, who had been silent and thoughtful, said to Raynal, in a voice scarce above a whisper: —

"Monsieur!"

"Mademoiselle!" rang the trombone.

"Am I not to go to Egypt?"

"No," was the brusque reply.

Josephine drew back, like a sensitive plant. But she returned to the attack.

"Nevertheless, monsieur, it seems to me that a wife's duty is to be by her husband's side, — to look after his comfort, — to console him when others vex him, — to soothe him when he is harassed."

"Her first duty is to obey him."

"Certainly."

"Well, when I am your husband, I shall bid you stay with your mother and sister, while I go to Egypt."

"As you please, monsieur."

"If I come back from Egypt, and you make the same proposal after we have lived together awhile, I shall jump at the offer: but this time stay where you are: look at your sister, a word more and we shall raise the waters. I don't think any the worse of you for making the offer, mademoiselle."

The next day at sharp nine two carriages were at the door. The ladies kept Raynal waiting, and threw out all his serial divisions of time at once. He stamped backwards and forwards, and twisted his mustaches and swore. This was a new torture to him, to be made unpunctual. Jacintha told them he was in a rage, and that made them nervous and flurried, and their fingers strayed wildly among hooks and eyes, and all sorts of fastenings; they were not ready till half past nine. Conscious they deserved a scolding, they sent Josephine down first. She dawned upon the honest soldier so radiant, so dazzling in her snowy dress, with her coronet of pearls (an heirloom), and her bridal veil parted, and the flush of conscious beauty on her cheek, that, instead of scolding her, he actually blurted out: —

"Well! by St. Denis, it was worth waiting half an hour for."

He recovered a quarter of an hour by making the driver gallop. Occasional shrieks issued from the carriage that held the baroness. The ancient lady anticipated annihilation. She had not come down from a galloping age.

They rattled into the town, drew up at the mayor's house, were received with great ceremony by that functionary and Picard, and entered the house.

When their carriages rattled into the little town from the north side, the wounded officer had already entered it from the south, and was riding at a foot's pace along the principal street. The motion of his horse now shook him past endurance. He dismounted at an inn a few doors from the mayor's house, and determined to do the rest of the short journey on foot. The landlord bustled about him obsequiously. "You are faint, my officer: you have travelled too far. Let me order you an excellent breakfast."

"No. I want a carriage; have you one?"

"My officer, I have two."

"Order one out."

"But, my officer, unluckily they are both engaged for the day and by people of distinction."

"Then I must rest here half an hour, and then proceed on foot."

The landlord showed him into a room: it had a large window looking on the street.

"Give me a couple of chairs to lie down on, and open the window: I feel faint."

"It is that monsieur wants his breakfast."

"Well. An omelet and a bottle of red wine: but open the window first."

He lay near the window, revived by the air, and watched the dear little street he had not seen for years, — watched with great interest to see what faces he could recognize and which were new.

The wounded hero felt faint, but happy, very, very happy.

CHAPTER XXII.

The marriage contract was signed and witnessed.

"Now to the church," cried the baroness, gayly.

"To the church! What for?" asked Raynal.

"Is not the wedding to take place this morning?"

"*Parbleu.*"

Picard put in his word with a knowing look.

"I understand, madame the baroness is not aware of the change in the law. People are not married in church now-a-days."

"People are not married in church?" and he seemed to her like one that mocketh.

"No. The state marries its citizens now; and with reason; since marriage is a civil contract."

"Marriage a civil contract!" repeated the baroness. "What, is it then no longer one of the holy Sacraments? What horrible impiety shall we come to next? Unhappy France!

Josephine, such a contract would never be a marriage in my eyes: and what would become of an union the Church had not blessed?"

"Madame," said Picard, "the Church can bless it still; but it is only the mayor here that can *do* it."

"My daughter! my poor daughter!"

All this time Josephine was blushing scarlet, and looking this way and that, with a sort of instinctive desire to fly and hide, no matter where, for a week or so.

"Haw! haw! haw!" roared Raynal: "here is a pretty mother. Wants her daughter to be unlawfully married in a church, instead of lawfully in a house. Give me the will!"

Picard handed him a document.

"Look here, mother-in-law; I have left Beaurepaire to my lawful wife."

"Otherwise," put in Picard, "in case of death, it would pass to his heir-at-law."

"And *he* would turn you all out, and that does not suit me. Now there stands the only man who can make mademoiselle my *lawful* wife. So quick march, monsieur the mayor, for time and Bonaparte wait for no man."

"Stay a minute, young people," said the mayor. "We should soothe respectable prejudices, not crush them. Madame, I am at least as old as you: and have seen many changes. I perfectly understand your feelings."

"Ah, monsieur! oh!"

"Calm yourself, dear madame: the case is not so bad as you think. It is perfectly true that in Republican France the civil magistrate alone can bind French citizens in lawful wedlock. But this does not annihilate the religious ceremony. You can ask the Church's blessing on my work; and be assured you are not the only one who retains that natural prejudice. Out of every ten couples that I marry, four or five go to church afterwards and perform the ancient ceremonies. And they do well. For there before the altar the priest tells them what it is not my business to dilate upon, the grave moral and religious duties they have undertaken along with this civil contract. The State binds, but the Church still blesses, and piously assents to that—"

"From which she has no power to dissent!"

"Monsieur Picard, do you consider it polite to interrupt the chief magistrate of the place while he is explaining the law to the citizen?"

Picard shut up like a knife.

"Ah, monsieur!" cried the baroness, "you are a worthy man. Monsieur, have you daughters?"

"Ay, madame! that I love well. I married one last year."

"Did you marry her after this fashion?"

"I married her myself, as I will marry yours if you will trust me with her."

"I will, monsieur: you are a father: you are a worthy man: you inspire me with confidence."

"And after I have made them one, there is nothing to prevent them adjourning to the church."

"I beg your pardon," cried Raynal, "there are two things to prevent it: things that wait for no man: time and Bonaparte. Come, sir, enough chat: to work."

The mayor assented. He invited Josephine to stand before him. She trembled and wept a little: Laure clung to her and wept, and the good mayor married the parties off-hand.

"Is that all?" asked the baroness; "it is terribly soon done."

"It is done effectively, madame," said the mayor, with a smile. "Permit me to tell you that his Holiness the Pope cannot undo my work."

Picard grinned slyly, and whispered something into Raynal's ear.

"Oh! indeed!" said Raynal, aloud, and carelessly. "Come, Madame Raynal, to breakfast: follow us."

They paired and followed the bride and bridegroom into the breakfast-room.

The light words Picard whispered were just five in number.

Those five words contained seven syllables. Now if the mayor had not snubbed Picard just before, he would have uttered those jocose but true words aloud. There was no particular reason why he should not. And if he had — The threads of the web of life, how subtle they are! The finest cotton of Manchester, the finer meshes of the spider, seem three-inch cables by comparison with those moral gossamers which vulgar eyes cannot see at all, the "somethings, nothings," on which great fates have hung.

It was a cheerful breakfast, thanks to Raynal, who was in high spirits and would not allow a word of regret from any one. Madame Raynal sat by his side, looking up at him every now and then with innocent admiration. A merry wedding breakfast!

Oh! if we could see through the walls of houses!

Five doors off sat a wounded soldier alone, recruiting the small remnant of his sore-tried strength, that he might struggle on to Beaurepaire, and lose in one moment years of separation, pain, prison, anguish, martyrdom, in one great gush of joy without compare.

CHAPTER XXIII.

The wedding breakfast was ended. The time was drawing near to part. There was a silence. It was broken by Madame Raynal.

"Monsieur," said she, a little timidly, "have you reflected?"

"On what?"

"About taking me to Egypt."

"No; I have not given it a thought since I said 'no.'"

"Yet permit me to say that it is my duty to be by your side, my husband!" and she colored at this word, — it was the first time she had ever used it.

"Not when I excuse you."

"I would not be an encumbrance to you, monsieur: I should not be useless. I could add more to his comfort than he gives me credit for, messieurs."

Warm assent of the mayor and notary.

"I give you credit for being an angel, my wife."

He looked up. Laure was trembling, her fork shaking in her poor little hand.

She cast a piteous glance at him.

"But all the generosity must not be on your side. You shall go with me next time; that is settled. Let us speak of it no more."

"Monsieur, I submit. At least, give me something to do for you while you are away. Ah! tell me what I can do for my absent friend to show my gratitude — my regard — my esteem."

"Well, madame, — let me think. Well, I saw a plain gray dress at Beaurepaire."

"Yes, monsieur. My gray silk, Laure."

"I like that dress."

"Monsieur, the moment I reach home after losing you I shall put it on, and it shall be my constant wear. I see, — you are right, — gray becomes a wife whose husband is not dead, but is absent, and alas! in hourly danger."

"Now look at that!" cried Raynal to the company. "That is her all over; she can see six meanings where another would see but one. I never thought of that, I swear. I like modest colors, that is all. My mother used to be all for modest wives wearing modest colors."

"Count on me, monsieur. Is there nothing more difficult you will be so good as give me to do?"

"No; there is only one order more, and that will be easier still to such a woman as you. I commit to your care, mademoiselle, — madame, I mean, — the name of Raynal. It is not so high a name as yours, but it is as honest. I am proud of it, — I am jealous of it. I shall guard it for you

in Egypt; you guard it in France for me."

"With my life!" cried Josephine, lifting her eyes and her hand to heaven.

Raynal rang the bell, and ordered his charger round.

The baroness began to cry.

"The young people may hope to see you again," said she; "but there are two chances against your poor old mother."

"Courage, mother!" cried the stout soldier. "No, no; you won't play me such a trick, — once is enough for that game."

"My brother!" cried Laure, "do not go without kissing your little sister, who loves you and thanks you."

He kissed her.

"Brave, generous man!" she cried, with her arms round his neck; "God protect you, and send you back safe to us!"

"Amen!" cried all present, by one impulse, — even the cold notary.

Raynal's mustache quivered.

He kissed Josephine hastily on the brow; the baroness on both cheeks, shook the men's hands warmly but hastily, and strode out without looking behind him.

They followed him to the door of the house. He was tightening his horse's girths He flung himself with all the resolution of his steel nature into the saddle, and, with one grand wave of his cocked hat to the tearful group, he spurred away for Egypt.

CHAPTER XXIV.

The baroness made the doctor go shopping.

"I must buy Laure a gray silk."

In doing this she saw many other tempting things. I say no more.

Meantime the young ladies went up to Beaurepaire in the other carriage, for Josephine wished to avoid the gaze of the town, and get home, and be quiet.

The driver went very fast. He had drank the bride's health at the mayor's, item the bridegroom's, the bridesmaid's, the mayor's, &c., &c., and "a spur in the head is worth two in the heel," says the proverb. The sisters leaned back on the soft cushions and enjoyed the smooth and rapid motion once so familiar to them, so rare of late.

Then Laure took her sister gently to task for having offered to go to Egypt.

"You forgot me, cruel one."

"No, love, did you not see I dared not look towards you. I love you better than all the world; but this was my duty. I was his wife: I had no longer a feeble inclination and a feeble disinclination to decide between, — but right on one side, wrong on the other."

"O, I know where your ladyship's strength lies: my force is — in — my inclinations."

"Yes! Laure," continued Josephine, thoughtfully, "duty is a great comfort, — it is tangible, — it is something to lay hold of for life or death: a strong tower for the weak but well disposed."

"How fast we glide, Josephine, — it is so nice. I am not above owning I love a carriage; now lean back with me, and take my hand, and as we glide shut your eyes and think, — whisper me all your feelings, all, all."

"Laure," said Josephine, half closing her eyes, "I feel a great calm, a heavenly calm."

"I thought you would," murmured Laure.

"My fate is decided. No more suspense. My duties are clear. I have a husband I am proud of. There is no perfidy with him, no deceit, no disingenuousness, no shade. He is a human sun. Nothing unmanly either. No feebleness: one can lean on him. He will make me a better, truer woman, and I him a happier man. Yes, is it not nice to think that great and strong as he is I can teach him a happiness he knows not as yet?"

And she smiled with the sense of her delicate power.

"Yes, go on, dear," purred Laure, "I seem to see your pretty little thoughts rising out of your heart like a bubbling fountain: go on."

"Yes, love, and then, gratitude, — Laure, I have heard it said, or read it somewhere, that gratitude is a burden: I don't understand that sentiment, — why, to me gratitude is a delight, gratitude is a passion. It is the warmest of all the tender feelings I have for dear Monsieur Raynal. I feel it glow here — in my bosom."

"One word, dear: do you think you shall love him?"

"Indeed, I do."

"When?"

"O, long before he comes back."

"*Before?*"

Josephine, her eyes still half closed, went murmuring on. "His virtues will always be present to me. His little faults of manner will not be in sight. Good Raynal! The image of those great qualities I revere so, perhaps because I fail in them myself, will be before my mind: and ere he comes home I shall love him: don't you think so? tell me."

"I am sure of it. I love him already. I am a selfish girl. My mother found me out. I am so much obliged to her. But I am not a wicked girl: and if I have been unkind to him, I will make it up to him. Go on, dear, tell me your whole heart."

"Yes. One reason why I wished to go home at once was — no — guess."

"To put on your gray silk. O, I know you."

"Yes, Laure, it was: dear good Raynal. Yes, I feel prouder of his honest name than of our noble one. And I am so calm, my sister, — so tranquil, — so pleased, that my mother's mind is at rest, — so convinced all is for the best, — so contented with my own lot, — so hap—py."

A gentle tear stole from beneath her long lashes. Laure looked at her wistfully: then laid her cheek to hers. They leaned back hand in hand, placid and silent.

The carriage glided fast. Beaurepaire was almost in sight.

Suddenly Josephine's hand tightened on Laure's, and she sat up in the carriage like a person awakened.

"What is it?" asked Laure. "Are we at home? No."

Josephine turned quickly round. "No window at the back," said she.

Laure instantly put her head out at the side window.

"What is it? I see nothing. What was it?"

"Some one in uniform."

"O, is that all."

"I saw an epaulet."

"O, an officer! I saw nobody. To be sure the road took a turn. Ah! you thought it was a message from Raynal."

"O no! on foot, — walking very slowly. Coming this way, too. Coming this way! Coming this way!"

"Ah, bah! it is no such rarity, — there are plenty of soldiers on the road."

"Not officers, — on foot."

After a pause Josephine added: —

"He seemed to drag himself along."

"O, did he?" cried Laure, carelessly. "Here we are; we are just at home."

"I am glad of it," said Josephine, "very glad."

"Will you go up stairs and put on your gown?"

"Presently. Let us walk in the Pleasance a minute first for the air."

They walked in the Pleasance.

"How you tear along, Josephine! Stop, let me look at you! What is the matter?"

"Nothing! nothing!"

"There 's a fretful tone; and how excited you are, why, you burn all over. Well, it 's no wonder; I thought you were calmer than natural after such an event."

"Who could he be, Laure?"

"Who?"

"That officer. I only saw his back: but did you not see him, Laure?"

"No."

"Are you sure you did not see him at all?"

"Why, of course not: I don't believe there was one; I am wrong; for there comes his cocked hat: I can see it bob every now and then above the palings."

Josephine turned very slowly round and looked: she said nothing.

"Come, dear," said Laure, "let us go in; the only cocked hat we care for is on the way to Paris!"

"Yes, Laure: let us go in. No! I can't go in, — I feel faint: I want air: I shall stay out a little longer! Look, Laure, what a shame! They put all manner of rubbish into this dear old tree: I will have it all turned out!" and she looked with feigned interest into the tree; but her eyes seemed turned inward.

Laure gave a cry of surprise.

"Josephine!"

"What? What?"

"He is waving his hat to me! What on earth does that mean?"

"He takes you for me!" said Josephine.

"Who is it?"

"*It is he!* I knew his figure at a glance!" and she blushed and trembled with joy; she darted into the tree and tried to look through the apertures: but she could not see at that angle: turning round she found Laure at her back, pale and stern.

"Ah! Laure, I FORGOT!!"

"Are you mad, Josephine? into the house this moment, — if it is he, I will receive and dismiss him. Fly! quick! for Heaven's sake."

"I can't! I must hear! O, don't fear! he shall never see me! I must know why he comes here to-day and not for all these years: some mystery is here: something terrible is going to happen! something terrible! — terrible! — terrible! — go outside: let him see you! — Oh! —"

Laure no sooner got round the tree again, than the cocked hat stopped,— a pale face, with eyes whose eager fire shone all that way into the tree, rose up and looked over the palings, and never moved.

Josephine's eyes were fixed on it.

"I feel something terrible coming! something terrible! terrible!"

"Malediction on him, heartless, selfish traitor!" cried Laure. "He has deserted you these three years: they have told him you are married: so he hunts you directly, to destroy your peace. Ah! I am glad you are come, wretch, to hear that a better man than you has got her: Josephine, you listen: I will tell him that you have a husband whom you love as you never loved him; and that if he dares to show his face here you will laugh at him, and your husband will kill him or kick him. O, I'll insult the *lâche*: I'll insult him as you never saw a man insulted yet."

"No, you will not!" said Josephine, doggedly: "for I should hate you."

"Ah! Josephine! — cruel Josephine. The accursed wretch! for him you have stabbed me!"

"And you me! Unmask him, and I will bless you on my knees! But pray do not insult him. We are parted forever. Be wise now, girl, be shrewd," hissed Josephine, in a tone of which one would not have thought her capable. "Find out who is the woman who has seduced him from me, and has brought two wretches to this! I tell you it is some bad woman's doing! He loved me once."

"Not so loud! — one word! — you are a wife! You will not let him see you, — swear!"

"O, never! never! Death sooner! When you have heard all, then tell him I am gone — tell him I went to Egypt this day with him I — Ah! would to God I had!"

"Sh! sh!"

"Sh!"

Camille was at the little gate.

Laure stood still, and nerved herself in silence. Josephine panted in her hiding-place.

Laure's only thought now was to expose the traitor to her sister, and restore her to that sweet peace. She would not see Camille till he was near her. He came eagerly towards her, his pale face flushing with great joy, and his eyes like diamonds.

"Josephine! it is not Josephine! Why this must be Laure, little Laure grown up to a fine lady, a beautiful lady — my darling!!"

"What do you come here for, monsieur?" asked Laure, in a tone of icy indifference.

"What do I come here for?" is that the way to speak to me? but I am too happy to mind. Dear Beaurepaire! do I see you once again? Ah, Laure, I am not given to despair, but there have been moments, look you — Bah! it is past. I am here."

"And madame?"

"What madame?"

"Madame Dujardin that is or was to be."

"This is the first I have ever heard of her," said Camille, gayly.

"This is odd, for we have heard all about it."

"Are you jesting?"

"No!"

"If I understand you right, you imply that I have broken faith with Josephine?"

"Certainly!"

"You lie! Mademoiselle Laure de Beaurepaire."

"Insolent!"

"No! it is you who have insulted your sister as well as me. She was not made to be deserted for meaner women. With me it has ever been one God, one Josephine! Come, mademoiselle, insult me, and me alone, and you shall find me more patient. O, who would have thought Beaurepaire would receive me thus?"

"It is your own fault."

"Are you sure?"

"Positive."

"Not my misfortune?"

"You never sent her a line for all these years."

"Alas, no! how could I?"

"Nonsense: well, monsieur, the information you did not supply others did."

"All the better? who? how?"

"We know from excellent authority that you deserted to the enemy."

"I! Camille Dujardin — deserted! Josephine, why are you not here? I know how to answer a man who insults me, but what can I say to a woman? O God, do you hear what they say to me after all I have gone through?"

"Ah, monsieur, you act well!" said Laure, acting herself, for her heart began to quake: "let us cut this short: you were seen in a Spanish village drinking between two guerillas?"

"Well!"

"An honest French soldier fired at you?"

"He did."

"You confess it," cried Laure, joyfully.

"The bullet passed through my hand, — here is the mark, look."

"Ah! ah! He and his comrades told us all."

"All?"

"All!"

"Did he tell you that under the table I was chained tight down to the chair I sat in? Did he tell you that my hand was fastened to a drinking-horn, and my elbow to the table, and two fellows sitting opposite me with pistols quietly covering me, ready to draw the trigger if I should utter a cry? Did he tell you that I would have uttered that cry and died at that table but for one thing? — I had promised her to live."

"What an improbable story!" said Laure, but her voice trembled. "Besides, what became of you this three years? Not a word, — not a line."

"Mademoiselle," began Camille, very coldly, "if you are really my Josephine's sister, you will reproach yourself for this so bitterly that I need not reproach you. If she I love were to share these unworthy suspicions it would kill me on the spot. I am then on my defence. I feel myself

blush, — God! — but it is for you I blush, not for myself. This is what became of me, I went out alone to explore. I fell into an ambuscade. I was surrounded. I shot one of them, and pinked another, but my arm being broken by a bullet, and my horse killed under me, the rascals got me. I was in fact insensible, probably from loss of blood, — a cut in the thigh. These fellows throw their knives with great force and skill. They took me about with them, tried to make a decoy of me, as I have told you, and ended by throwing me into a dungeon, — a damp, dark dungeon. They loaded me with chains too, though the walls were ten feet thick, and the door iron, and bolted and double-bolted outside. And there for months and years, in spite of wounds, hunger, thirst, and all the tortures those cowards made me suffer, I lived, because, Laure, I had promised some one at that gate there" (and he turned suddenly and pointed to it) "that I would come back alive. At last one night my jailer came to my cell drunk. I seized him by the throat and throttled him: I did not kill him, but I griped him till he was insensible: his keys unlocked my fetters, and locked them again upon his limbs, and locked him in the cell, and I got safely outside. But there a sentinel saw me, and fired at me. He missed me, but ran after me, and caught me, — for I was stiff, confined so long, — he gave me a thrust of his bayonet, I flung my heavy keys fiercely in his face, — he staggered, — I wrested his piece from him, and disabled him."

"Ah!"

"I crossed the frontier in the night, and got to Bayonne; and thence, day and night, to Paris. There I met a reward for all my anguish. A greater is behind, a greater is behind! They gave me the epaulets of a colonel. See, here they are. France does not give these to traitors, young lady. And from the moment I left dark Spain and entered once more *la belle France*, every man and woman on the road was so kind, so sympathizing; some cried after me, 'God speed you!' They felt for the poor worn soldier coming back to his love. All but you, Laure. You told me I was a traitor."

"Forgive me. I — I — " and she thought, "O Heaven enlighten me, — what shall I say? — what shall I do?"

"O, if you repent," cried he, "that is different, I forgive you. There is my hand. You are not a soldier, and did not know what you were talking about. I am very sorry I spoke so harshly to you. But you understand. How you look! How you pant! Poor child! I forgive you. There, I will show you how I forgive you. These epaulets, dear, — I have never put them on. I said, no, Josephine shall put them on for me. I will take honor as well as happiness from her dear hand. But you are her sister, and what are epaulets compared with what she will give me? You shall put them on, dear. Come; then you will be sure I bear no malice."

Laure, faint at heart, consented in silence, and fastened on the epaulets. "Yes, Camille," she said, "think of glory now: nothing but glory."

"No one thinks of it more. But to-day how can I think of it, how can I give her a rival? To-day, I am all love. Laure, no man ever loved a human creature as I love Josephine. Your mother is well, dear? All are well at Beaurepaire? O, where is she all this time? in the house?" He was moving quickly towards the house: but Laure in turn put out her hand to stop him. He recoiled a little and winced.

"What is the matter?" cried she.

"Nothing, dear girl; you put your hand on my wound, — that is all."

"O, you are wounded?"

"Yes; I got a bayonet thrust from one of the sentinels when I escaped from prison. It is a little inflamed, I will tell you; but you must promise and not tell Josephine; why vex that angel? This wound has worried me a little all the way. They wanted me

to stop and lay up at Bayonne, — how could I? and again at Paris, — how could I? They said, 'You will die.' 'Not before I get to Beaurepaire,' said I. I could bear the motion of a horse no longer. I asked for a carriage. Would you believe it? — both his carriages were out at a wedding. I could not wait till they came back. I have waited an eternity. I came on foot. I dragged myself along, — the body was weak, but the heart was strong. A little way from here my wound seemed inclined to open; I pressed it together tight with my hand; you see I could not afford to lose any more blood, and so struggled on. 'Die?' said I, 'not before Beaurepaire.' And O Laure, now I could be content to die, — at her feet, — for I am happy! — O, I am happy! What I have gone through! But I kept my word, — and this is Beaurepaire! Hurrah!" — and his pale cheek flushed feebly, and his eye gleamed, and he waved his hat feebly over his head, — "hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!"

"O, don't! — don't! — don't!"

"How can I help?—I am wild with joy, — hurrah! hurrah! hurrah!"

"Oh! no! no! no! no! no!"

"What is the matter?"

"Oh! must I stab you worse than all your enemies have stabbed you?"

"What is the matter? You turn me cold, — very cold. What is the matter? Josephine does not come. My heart!"

"Camille, — my poor Camille! there is but one thing for you to do. Leave Beaurepaire on the instant, — fly from it, — it is no place for you."

"She is dead!"

"No."

"She is dead! — she does not come to me, — she is dead! You are all in white, — they mourn in white for angels like her that go to Heaven, — virgins! Oh! I was blind. You might have told me at once. You see I can bear it. What does it matter to one who loves as I love? It is only to give her one more proof I lived only for her. I would have died a hundred times but for my promise to her. Yes! I am coming, love! I am coming!"

He fell on his knees and smiled, and whispered: —

"I am coming, Josephine, —I am coming!"

A sob and a moan as of a creature dying in anguish answered him.

Laure screamed with terror when she heard it.

Camille rose wildly to his feet.

"I hear her! she is behind the tree."

"No! no!"

A rustle and a rush were heard in the tree.

Camille darted furiously round the tree. Laure followed the next moment.

Josephine was in his arms.

Josephine wrestled long and terribly with nature in that old oak-tree. But who can so struggle forever? Anguish, remorse, horror, despair, and love wrenched her heart to and fro, like giants fighting for a prey: and oh! mysterious human heart! gleams of a mad fitful joy shot through her, coming quick as lightning, going as quickly, and leaving the despair darker. And oh! the fierce struggle of the soul to make itself heard. More than once she had to close her mouth with her hand: more than once she seized her throat, not to cry out. But, as the struggle endured, she got weaker and weaker, and nature mightier and mightier. And when the wounded hero fell on his knees so close to her, — when he who had resisted death so bravely for her prepared to give up life calmly for her, her bosom rose beyond all control: it seemed to fill to choking, then to split wide open and give the struggling soul passage in one gasping sob and heart-stricken cry.

Could she have pent this in, she must have died.

It betrayed her. She felt it had: then came the woman's instinct, —

flight: the coward's impulse,— flight: the chaste wife's instinct, — flight: She rushed from her hiding-place and made wildly for the house.

But Camille was darting round the tree. She ran right upon him. He caught her in his arms. He held her irresistibly. "I have got her, — I have got her," he shouted in wild triumph. "No! I will not let you go. None but God shall ever take you from me, and he has spared you to me. You are not dead: you have kept faith as I have! You have lived. See! look at me. I am alive, — I am well, — I am happy. I told Laure I had suffered. I lied. If I had suffered I should remember it. It is all gone at sight of you, my love! my love! O my Josephine! my love!"

His arm was firm round her waist. His glowing eyes poured love upon her. She felt his beating heart.

All that passed in her, — what mortal can say? She seemed two women: that part of her which could not get away from his strong arm lost all strength to resist, — it yielded and thrilled under his embrace, her bosom heaving madly; all that was free writhed away from him; her face was averted with a glare of terror, and both her hands put up between his eyes and it.

"You turn away your head. Laure, she turns away. Speak for me. Scold her; for I don't know how to scold her. No answer from either; O what has turned your hearts against me so?"

"Camille," cried Laure, the tears streaming down her cheeks, "my poor Camille! leave Beaurepaire. O, leave it at once."

He turned towards her with a look of inquiry.

At that Josephine, like some feeble but nimble wild creature on whom a grasp has relaxed, writhed away from him and fled. "Farewell! Farewell!" she cried.

It seemed despair itself who spoke.

She had not taken six steps when Jacintha met her right in front. "Madame Raynal," she cried, courtesying, "the baroness is in the summer-house, and wants to speak to you. I was the first to call her madame"; and Jacintha, little dreaming of all she had done, went off in triumph, after another courtesy.

This blow turned those three to stone.

Josephine had no longer the power or the wish to fly. "Better so," she thought, and she stood cowering. Then the great passions that had spoken so loud were struck dumb, and a deep silence fell upon the place. Madame Raynal's quivering eye turned slowly and askant towards Camille, but stopped in terror ere it could see him.

Silence, — dead silence!

The ladies knew by this fearful stillness that the truth was creeping on Camille.

Madame Raynal cowered more and more.

Camille spoke one word in a low whisper: —

"Madame?"

Dead silence.

"White? both in white?"

"Camille, it was our doing. We drove her to it. O sir, look how afraid of you she is. Do not kill her; do not reproach her, if you are a man."

He waved her out of his way as if she had been some idle feather, and he walked up to Josephine. "It is for you to speak to me, my betrothed. Are you married?" The poor creature, true to her nature, was thinking more of him than herself. Even in her despair it flashed across her, "If he knew all, he too would be wretched for life. If I let him scorn me, he may be happy one day." She cowered, the picture of sorrow and tongue-tied guilt.

"Are you a wife?"

"Yes!"

He staggered.

"This is how I came to be suspected: she I loved was false?"

"Yes, Camille!"

"No! no!" cried Laure. "She alone never suspected you; and we have brought her to this, — we alone."

"Be silent, Laure; O, be silent!!!" gasped Josephine.

"I lived for you: I would have died for you; you could not even wait for me."

A low moan, but not a word of excuse.

"What can I do for you now?"

"Forget me, Camille!"

"Forget you? O never! never! There is but one thing I can do to show you how I loved you, — forgive you, and begone. Whither shall I go? whither shall I go now?"

"O Camille, your words stab her: she —"

"Be silent! let none speak but I, — none here but I has the right to speak. Poor weak angel that loved yet could not wait: I forgive you! be happy! — if you can — I bid you be hap-py!"

The gentle, despairing tones died away, and with them life seemed to end to her, and hope to go out. He turned his back quickly on her. "To the army!" he cried, hoarsely. He drew himself haughtily up in marching attitude. He took three strides, erect and fiery and bold. At the fourth the great heart snapped, and the worn body it had held up so long rolled like a dead log upon the ground with a tremendous fall.

CHAPTER XXV.

The baroness and St. Aubin were walking gently on the South Terrace, when suddenly they heard shrieks of terror in the Pleasance. They came with quaking hearts as fast as their old limbs would carry them. They found Laure and Josephine crouched over the body of a man, — an officer.

Laure was just tearing open his collar and jacket. Dard and Jacintha had run from the kitchen at the screams. Camille lay on his back, white and motionless.

The doctor now came up. "Who! what is this?" He shook his head. "This is a bad case. Stand away, ladies. Let me feel his pulse."

Whilst the old man was going stiffly down on one knee, Jacintha uttered a cry of terror. "See! see! his shirt! that red streak! Ah! ah! it is getting bigger and bigger": and she turned faint in a moment, and would have fallen but for Dard.

The doctor looked. "All the better," said he, firmly. "I thought he was dead! His blood flows: then I will save him! Don't clutch me so, Josephine, — don't cling to me like that. Now is the time to show your breed: not turn sick at the sight of a little blood like that foolish creature; but help me save the poor man."

"Take him in-doors!" cried the baroness.

"Into our house, mamma?" gasped Laure.

"The lightning would strike it if we did not!" cried the baroness. "What! a wounded soldier who has fought for France! leave him to lie and die outside my door, — never! what would my son say? He is a soldier."

Laure cast a hasty look at Josephine; Josephine's eyes were bent on the ground and her hands clenched.

"Now, Jacintha, you be off!" cried the doctor. "I can't have cowards about him to make the others as bad; go and stew down a piece of good beef for him, my girl."

"That I will; poor thing."

The baroness recognized Camille.

"Why, I know him: it is an old acquaintance, young Dujardin, — you remember, Josephine; I used to suspect him of a fancy for you, poor fellow! Why, he must have come here to see us, — poor soul."

"No matter who it is, — it is a man. Now, girls, have you courage, have you humanity? Then come one on each side of him and take hands beneath his back, while I lift his head and Dard his legs."

Dard assented.

"And handle him gently, monsieur, whatever you do," said Dard. "I know what it is. I have been wounded."

These four carried the lifeless burden very slowly and gently across the Pleasance to the house: then with more difficulty and caution up the stairs.

All the while the sisters' hands griped one another tight beneath the lifeless burden, and spoke to one another. And Josephine's arms upheld tenderly, but not weakly the hero she had struck down. She avoided Laure's eye, her mother's eye, and even the doctor's eye; one gasping sob escaped her as she walked with head half averted and vacant, terror-stricken eyes, and her victim on her sustaining arm.

They laid him in the tapestried chamber.

"I must have an airy room for him," said the doctor. "Now, away with you, girls: Dard, help me undress him."

Laure took Josephine's hand: "Sit on the stairs," said she: "then when Dard comes out we shall hear."

Josephine obeyed passively. She sat in gloomy silence, her eyes on the ground, like one waiting for her death-blow.

Laure, sick at heart, sat silent too. At last she said faintly, "Have we done well?"

"I don't know," said Josephine, doggedly. Her eyes never left the ground.

"We could not let him die for want of care and skill. He will not thank us, my sister. Better to die than live."

At this instant Dard came running down. "Good news! Mesdemoiselles! good news! the wound runs all along: it is not deep, like mine was. He has opened his eyes and shut them again. The dear good doctor stopped the blood in a twinkle. The doctor says he'll be bound to save him. I must run and tell Jacintha. She is taking on in the kitchen."

Josephine, who had risen eagerly from her despairing posture, clasped her hands together; then lifted up her voice and wept.

"He will live! he will live!"

When she had wept a long while she said to Laure: "Come, my sister, help your poor Josephine."

"Yes, love, what?"

"My duty," faltered Josephine, — "my duty that an hour ago seemed so sweet." And she fell to weeping patiently again.

They went to Josephine's room. She crept slowly to a wardrobe, and took out a gray silk dress.

"O, never mind for to-day," cried Laure. "Alas! alas!"

"Help me, my sister. It is for myself as well."

"For yourself?"

"To remind me every moment I am Madame Raynal."

They put the gray gown on her, both weeping patiently. It will be known at the last day what honest women have suffered weeping silently in this noisy world.

Camille soon recovered his senses and a portion of his strength: then the irritation of his wound brought on fever. This in turn retired before the doctor's remedies and a sound constitution; but it left behind it a great weakness and general prostration. And in this state the fate of the body depends greatly on the mind.

The baroness and the doctor went constantly to see him and soothe him: he smiled and often thanked them, but his eager eyes watched the door for one who came not.

When he got well enough to leave his bed the largest couch was sent up to him from the saloon: a kind hand lined the baron's silk dressing-gown for him warm and soft and nice: and he would sit or lie on his couch, or take two turns in the room leaning upon Laure's shoulder, and glad of the support: and O, he looked so

piteously in her eyes when she came, and when she went. Laure lowered her eyes before them, — she could do nothing, — she could say nothing.

She saw that with his strength Camille had lost a portion of his pride: that he pined for a sight of her he no longer respected: pined for her, — as the thirsty pine for water in Zahara.

At last one day he spoke.

"How kind you are to me, Laure! how kind you all are, — but one."

He waited in hopes she would say something, but she held her tongue.

"At least tell me why it is. Is she ashamed? Is she afraid?"

"Neither."

"She hates me? it is then true that we hate those whom we have wounded. Cruel! cruel Josephine. O heart of marble, against which my heart has wrecked itself forever!"

"Alas! she is not cruel, — but she is Madame Raynal."

"Ah! — I forgot! But have I no claim on her? Nearly four years she has been my betrothed. What have I done? Was I ever false to her? I could forgive her for what she has done to me, but she cannot forgive me. Does she mean never to see me again?"

"What good could come of it?"

"Very well," said Camille, with a malicious smile. "I am in her way. I see what she wants, — she shall have it."

Laure carried these words to Josephine. They went through her like a sword.

Laure pitied her.

"Let us go to him. Anything is better than this."

"Laure, I dare not."

The next day early, Josephine took Laure to a door outside the house, a door that had long been disused. Nettles grew before it. She produced a key and with great difficulty opened this door.

"Ah, it is a good many years since I have been in there," said Laure.

"Why, Josephine, it leads to the tapestry chamber."

"Yes."

"What am I to do?"

"Watch him! you remember where we used to peep through into the room."

"Yes! Ah, how happy we were then."

"Watch him, as a mother does her child. O, if anything happens to him while he is under my care — "

"Be calm, love, do not fear, I will watch him. I share your misgivings, your fears, I share all with you."

"My sister! my Laure! my guardian angel! oh, if I had not you, who know what a miserable woman I am, I should go raving mad!"

When Josephine had placed Camille under this strange surveillance, she felt a little, a very little easier, she hardly knew why; for in truth it was a vague protection against a danger equally mysterious. So great was Josephine's forethought, so unflinching her determination, that she never once could be prevailed on to mount those stairs, and peep at Camille herself. "I must starve my heart, not feed it." And she grew paler and more hollow-eyed day by day.

Yet this was the same woman who showed such feebleness and irresolution when Raynal pressed her to marry him.

But then, dwarfs feebly drew her this way and that. Now giants fought for her. Between a feeble inclination and a feeble disinclination her dead heart drifted to and fro. Now honor, duty, gratitude, which with her was a passion, dragged her one way, — love, pity, and remorse another.

Neither of these giants would relax his grasp, and nothing yielded except her vital powers. Yes; her temper — the loveliest temper Heaven ever gave a human creature — was soured at times.

There lay the man she loved pining for her. Cursing her for her cruelty, — praying Heaven to forgive

him and to bless her, and curse him instead, — sighing, at intervals, all the day long so loud, so deep, so piteously, as if his heart broke with each sigh; and sometimes, for he little knew, poor soul, that any human eye was upon him, casting aside his manhood in his despair, and flinging himself on the very floor, and muffling his head, and sobbing, — he a hero.

And here was she pining in secret for him who pined for her. "I am not a woman at all," cried she, who was all woman. "I am crueller to him than a tiger or any savage creature is to the victim she tears. I must not tempt you. To love me now is a sin. I must cure you of your love for me, and then die: for what shall I have to live for? He weeps, he sighs, he cries for Josephine!"

This enforced cruelty was more contrary to this woman's nature as well as to her heart than black is to white, or heat to cold; and Nature rebelled with all her forces. As when a rock tries to stem a current, the water fights its way on more sides than one, so insulted Nature dealt with Josephine. Not only did her body pine, but her nerves were exasperated. Sudden twitches came over her, that almost made her scream. Her permanent state was utter despondency; but across it came fitful flashes of irritation; and then she was scarce mistress of herself.

Wherefore, you who find some holy woman cross and bitter, stop a moment before you sum her up vixen and her religion naught: inquire the history of her heart: perchance, beneath the smooth, cold surface of duties well discharged, her life has been, or even is, a battle against some self-indulgence the insignificant saint's very blood cries out for: and so the poor thing is cross, not because she is bad, but because she is better than the rest of us, — yet human.

As for Josephine's little bursts of fretfulness, they were always followed by disproportionate penitence and pathetic efforts to be so very kind to those whom she had scratched, and then felt for as if she had ploughed great bleeding furrows in them.

Now, though she was more on her guard with the baroness than with Laure, or the doctor, or Jacintha, her state could not altogether escape the vigilance of a mother's eye.

But the baroness had not the clew we have.

That makes all the difference: how small an understanding put by accident or instruction on the right track shall run the game down: how great a sagacity shall wander if it gets on a false scent.*

"Doctor, you are so taken up with your patient, you neglect the rest of us. Do look at Josephine! She is ill!"

"No, madame, or she would have told me."

"Well, then, she is going to be ill. She is so pale, and so fretful, so peevish, which is not in her nature. Would you believe it, doctor, she snaps?"

"Our Josephine snap? This is new."

"And snarls!"

"Then look for the end of the world."

"The other day I heard her snap Laure; and this morning she half snarled at me, just because I pressed her to go and console our patient. Hush! here she is. My child, I am accusing you to monsieur here. I am telling him you neglect his patient."

"I, mamma?"

"You never go near him.

"I will visit him one of these days," said Josephine, coldly.

"One of these days, my daughter! You used not to be so hard-hearted. A soldier, an old comrade of your

* *Vide* all authentic records of man's reasonings and inventions: for climax plunge from Newton reasoning astronomy down to Newton reasoning alchemy

husband's, wounded and sick, and you alone never go to him to console him with a word of sympathy or encouragement."

Josephine looked at her mother with a sort of incredulous stare.

"I do not recognize you. You who are so kind-hearted and pitiful, except to wounded soldiers."

Josephine smiled bitterly. Then after a struggle she replied with a tone and manner so spiteful and icy that it would have deceived even us who know her, had we heard it.

"He has plenty of nurses without me," she added, almost violently. "My husband, if he were wounded, would not have so many, perhaps not have one."

With this she rose and went out, leaving them aghast. She sat down in the passage on a window-seat, and laughed hysterically.

Laure heard her and ran to her. Josephine told her what her mother had said to her. Laure soothed her.

"Never mind. You have your sister who understands you: don't come in till they have got some other topic."

Laure out of curiosity went in, and found a discussion going on. The doctor was fathoming Josephine for the benefit of his companion.

"It is a female jealousy; and of a mighty innocent kind. We are so occupied with this poor fellow, she thinks her soldier is forgotten."

"Surely, doctor, our Josephine would not be so unreasonable, so unjust."

"She belongs to a sex, be it said without offending you, madame, among whose numberless virtues justice does not fill a prominent place."

The baroness shook her head.

"That is not it. It is a piece of prudery. This young gentleman was a sort of admirer of hers, though she did not admire him much, as far as I remember. But it was four years ago; and she is married to a man she loves, or is going to love."

"Well, but, mamma, a trifling excess of delicacy is surely excusable."

"It is not delicacy: it is prudery. And when people are sick and suffering, an honest woman should take up her charity, and lay down her prudery or her coquetry: two things that I suspect are the same thing in different shapes."

Here Jacintha came in.

"Mademoiselle, here is the colonel's broth: Madame Raynal has flavored it for him, and you are to take it up to him, and keep him company while he eats it."

"Come," cried the baroness, "my lecture has not been lost."

Laure followed Jacintha up stairs. Laure was heart and head on Raynal's side.

She had deceived him about Josephine's attachment, and felt all the more desirous to guard him against any ill consequences of it. Then he had been so generous to her; he had left her her sister, who would have gone to Egypt, and escaped this misery, but for her.

But on the other hand, if I may use a great master's words,

"Gentle pity
Tugged at her heart-strings with complaining cries."

This watching of Camille made her wretched. When she was with him his pride bore him up: but when he was alone, as he thought, his anguish and despair were terrible, and broke out in so many ways that often Laure shrank in terror from her peephole.

She dared not tell Josephine the half of what she saw: what she did tell her agitated her so terribly; and often Laure had it on the tip of her tongue to say, "Do pray go and see if you can say nothing that will do him good": but she fought the impulse down. This battle of feeling, though less severe than her sister's, was constant: it destroyed her gayety. She whose merry laugh used to ring like chimes through the house never laughed now, seldom smiled,

and often sighed. The elders felt a deep gloom settle down upon the house.

One evening the baroness, Josephine, and St. Aubin sat in the saloon, in dead silence.

Doctor St. Aubin had been the last to succumb to the deep depression, but for a day or two he had been as grave and as sad as the rest.

He now broke silence.

"I am glad Laure is out of the room," said he, thoughtfully; "I wish to consult you two."

"We listen, my friend," said the baroness, with interest.

"It is humiliating, after all my experience, to be obliged to consult unprofessional persons. Forty years ago I should have been *too wise* to do so. But since then I have often seen science baffled and untrained intelligences throw light upon hard questions; and your sex in particular has luminous instincts and reads things by flashes that we men miss with a microscope. Our dear Madame Raynal read that notary, and to this day I believe she could not tell us how."

"I know very well how I read him, dear friend."

"How?"

"O, I can't *tell* how."

"There you see. Well, then, you must help me in this case. And this time I promise to treat your art with more respect."

"And who is it she is to read now?" asked the baroness.

Josephine said nothing, but trembled, and was secretly but keenly on her guard.

"Who should it be but my poor patient? He puzzles me. I never knew a patient so faint-hearted."

"A soldier faint-hearted!" exclaimed the baroness. "To be sure these men that storm cities and fire cannon, and cut and hack one another with so much spirit, are poor creatures compared with us when they have to lie quiet and suffer."

"Josephine," said the doctor, abruptly, "do you know Colonel Dujardin's character?"

"No! yes! by the bulletins of the army,—long ago."

"Do you know his history?"

"No,—yes. He told Laure: and she told me. He was taken prisoner in Spain. The cowards made him suffer tortures. O doctor! he is alive by a miracle. I cannot think that Heaven will desert him now. Do send for Laure; she will tell you better than I can all he has gone through."

"No," said St. Aubin, "you mistake me. That is not what I want to know. It is not the past but the present that gives me so much concern. Past dangers are present delights."

"Doctor, what do you mean?"

"I mean this, that he ought to get well, and does not. But it is not my fault: no man can be cured without his own help; and he will not put a finger to the work. Patients complain of our indifference: it is not so here: I am all anxiety and zeal, and my sick man is his own by-stander apathetic as a log."

The doctor walked the room in great excitement.

"Ladies, for pity's sake help me: get his history from him, and tell it me: you, Josephine, with your instincts, do for pity's sake help me: do throw off that sublime indifference you have manifested all along to this man's fate."

"She has not!" cried the baroness, firing up. "She lined his dressing-gown for him; and she inspects everything that he eats: do you not?"

"Yes! my mother."

"Have patience, my friend: time will cure your patient, and time alone."

"Time! you speak as if time was a quality: time is only a measure of events, favorable or unfavorable: time kills as many as it cures."

"Why, doctor, you surely would not imply his life is in any danger?"

"Should I be saying all this if it was not? Must I speak out? Well, then, I will. If some change does not take place soon, he will be a dead man in another fortnight. That is all *time* will do for him. Now."

The baroness uttered an exclamation of pity and distress.

Josephine put her hand to her bosom, and a creeping horror came over her, and then a faintness. Suddenly she rushed from the room. In the passage she met Laure coming hastily towards the *salon*, laughing: the first time she had laughed this many a day. O what a contrast between the two faces that met there, — the one pale and horror-stricken, the other rosy and laughing!"

"Well, dear, at last I am paid for all my trouble. I have found my lord out. What do you think he does? What is the matter?"

"Nothing, — tell me! tell me!"

"You are agitated, Josephine. My sister, — my sweet sister! What have they been doing to you now? You want my story first? Very well. O, the doctor would be in a fine rage if he knew it."

"The doctor?"

"Yes! it is soon told. Camille never takes a drop of his medicine. He pours it into the ashes under the grate. I saw him. I caught him in the act, — ha! ha!"

Josephine stared wildly at Laure to hear her laugh.

"Ah! I forgot: you don't know: come."

"Where to?"

"To *him*."

Josephine paused on the first landing.

"Promise me not to contradict a word I shall say to him. I must hide my heart from him I love, — yes, him I love, I adore, I worship. Ah! I have got you to whom I can tell the truth, or I could not go on the walking lie I am. I love him: I adore him: I will deceive him, and save him, and then lie down and die."

"Be calm! pray be calm!" said Laure. "O that he had never been born! Say what you will, I will not speak. Shall I tell him you are coming?"

"No. Let me have every advantage: let me think beforehand every word I shall say: but take him by surprise, coward and double-face that I am."

The sisters stood at the door. Josephine's heart beat audibly. She knocked: a faint voice said, "Come in." She and Laure entered the room. Camille sat on the sofa, his head bowed over his hands. A glance showed Josephine that he was doggedly and resolutely thrusting himself into the grave. Thinking it was only Laure, for he had now lost all hope of seeing Josephine come in at the door, he never moved. Some one glided gently but rapidly up to him.

He looked up.

Josephine was kneeling to him.

He lifted his head with a start, and trembled all over.

"Camille, I am come to you to beg your pity, to appeal to your generosity, to ask a favor, — I who deserve so little of you."

"You have waited a long time," said Camille, agitated greatly; "and so have I," he added, bitterly.

"Camille, you are killing one who loved you once, and who has been very weak and faithless, but not so wicked as she appears."

"How am I killing you?"

"With remorse, — to see you sinking into the tomb. Camille, is this generous of you? Do I not suffer enough? Would you make me a murderess?"

"Then why have you never been near me? I could forgive your weakness, but not your heartlessness."

"It is my duty. I have no right to seek your society. If you really wanted mine you would get well, and so join us down stairs a week or two before you leave us."

"How am I to get well? My heart is broken."

"Be a man, Camille. Do not fling away a soldier's life because a fickle, worthless woman could not wait for you. Forgive like a man, or revenge yourself like a man. If you cannot forgive me, kill me. See, I kneel at your feet. I will not resist you. Kill me!"

"I wish I could. Oh! if I could kill you with a look and myself with a wish! No man should ever take you from me then. We would be together in the grave at this hour. Do not tempt me, I say!"

And he cast a terrible look of love, and hatred, and despair upon her.

Her purple eye never winced: it poured back tenderness and affection in return.

He saw and turned away with a groan, and held out his hand to her.

She seized it and kissed it. "You are great, you are generous; you will not strike me as a woman strikes, — you will not die to drive me to despair."

"Ah! you love me still!"

"No! no! no! my heart is dead. But I loved you once. When I had a right to love you. A woman cannot forget all. Can you? Yes! you can, to be revenged on poor silly Josephine."

"I see: love is gone, — but pity remains, — I thought that was gone too."

"Yes, Camille," said Josephine in a whisper; "pity remains, and remorse and terror at what I have done to a man of whom I was never worthy."

"Well, madame, as you have come at last to me, and even do me the honor to ask me a favor, — I shall try — if only out of courtesy — to — ah, Josephine! Josephine! when did I ever refuse you anything?"

At this Josephine sank into a chair, and burst out crying. Camille, at this, began to cry too; and the two poor things sat a long way from one another, and sobbed bitterly.

The man, weakened as he was, recovered his quiet despair first.

"Don't cry so, my poor soul!" said he. "But tell me what is your will, and I shall obey you as I used before any one came between us!"

"Then! live, Camille! I implore you to live!"

"Well, Josephine, since you care about it, I will live."

"Since I care! — oh! — bless you, Camille. How good you are: how generous you are. You have promised, — you keep your promises: you are not like me."

"Why did not you come before and ask me? I thought I was in your way. I thought you wanted me dead."

Josephine cast a look of wonder and anguish on Camille, but she said nothing. She rang the bell, and, on Jacintha coming up, she despatched her to Doctor St. Aubin for the patient's medicine.

"Tell the doctor," said she, "Colonel Dujardin has let fall the glass."

While Jacintha was gone, she scolded Camille gently.

"How could you be so unkind to the poor doctor, who loves you so?"

"What have I done to him?" asked Camille, coloring.

"You throw away his medicines. Do you think I am blind. Look at the ashes; they are wet. Camille, are you too becoming disingenuous?"

"He gives me tonics that do me too much good; I could not die quick enough, — there, forgive me. I have promised to live, — I will live."

Jacintha came in with the tonic in a glass, and retired with an obeisance.

Josephine took it to Camille.

"Drink with me, then," said he, "or I will not touch it."

Josephine took the glass.

"I drink to your health, Camille, and to your glory: laurels to your brow, my hero! and some faithful woman to your heart, who will make you forget this folly: it is for her I save you." She put the glass with well-acted spirit to her lips; but in

the very action a spasm seized her throat and almost choked her; she lowered her head that he might not see her face and tried again; but the tears burst from her eyes and ran into the liquid, and her lips trembled over the brim, and could n't.

"Ah! give it me," he cried: "there is a tear of yours in it."

He drank off the bitter remedy now as if it had been nectar.

Josephine blushed.

"If you wanted me to live, why did you not come here before?"

"I did not think you would be so foolish, so wicked, so cruel as to do what you have been doing."

"Josephine, come and shine upon me every day, and you shall have no fresh cause of complaint: things flourish in the sunshine that die in the dark: Laure, it is as if the sun had come into my prison; you are pale, but you are beautiful as ever, — more beautiful; what a sweet dress! so quiet, so modest, it sets off your beauty instead of vainly trying to vie with it."

He put out his hand and took her gray silk dress and went to kiss it as a devotee kisses the altar steps.

She snatched it furiously away with a shudder.

"Yes, you are right," said she; "thank you for noticing my dress: it is a beautiful dress, — ha! ha! A dress I take a pride in wearing, and always shall, I hope. I mean to be buried in it. Come, Laure! Thank you, Camille; you are very good, you have once more promised me to live. Get well; come down stairs; then you will see me every day, you know, — there is a temptation. Good by, Camille! — are you coming, Laure? What are you loitering for? God bless you, and comfort you, and help you to forget what it is madness to remember!"

She was gone.

The room seemed to darken to Camille.

Outside the door Josephine caught hold almost fiercely of Laure.

"Have I committed myself?"

"Over and over again. Do not look so terrified! — I mean to me: but not to him. Oh! what a fool he is! and how much better you must know him than I do to venture on such a transparent deceit. He believes whatever you tell him. He is all ears, and no eyes. Yes, love, I watched him keenly all the time. He really thinks it is pity and remorse; nothing more. My poor sister, you have a hard life to lead, — a hard game to play: but so far you have succeeded: you could look poor Raynal in the face if he came home to-day."

"Then God be thanked," cried Josephine. "I am as happy to-day as I can ever hope to be. Now let us go through the farce of dressing: it is near dinner-time; and then the farce of talking, and, hardest of all, the farce of living."

From that hour, Camille began to get better very slowly, yet perceptibly.

The doctor, afraid of being mistaken, said nothing for some days, but at last he announced the good news at the dinner-table. It was no news to either of the sisters. Laure had watched every symptom, and had told Josephine. "He is to come down stairs in three days," added the doctor.

The baroness. "Thank heaven! and, now that anxiety is removed, I do hope you will have time to cure her who is dearer to us than all the world."

Josephine. "My mother: there is nothing the matter with me."

Baroness. "Then why do you answer? I mentioned nobody."

Josephine was confused: the doctor smiled; but he said, kindly: "Indeed, you look pale, and somewhat thinner."

Baroness. "Thinner? What wonder, when she eats nothing?"

St. Aubin. "Is this true? Do you eat nothing?"

Josephine. "I eat as much as I require. I have often heard you say

we should eat no more than we can relish."

St. Aubin. "She is right. Perhaps we dine too early for you. I observe you don't seem to enjoy your dinner."

Josephine. "Enjoy — my dinner?"

St. Aubin. "Why not? You are not an angel in body, though you are in mind; and if you don't enjoy your dinner, there is something wrong. However, perhaps Jacintha does not give us the dishes you like."

Josephine. "No! no! it is not that. All dishes taste like one to me."

St. Aubin. "What do they taste like?"

Josephine. "Like? — like all the same, — quite tasteless. Don't tease me. What does it matter?"

Baroness. "There, doctor, there: see how fretful the poor child is getting."

St. Aubin. "I see, madame, and divine the cause. Now, Madame Raynal, let us be serious. I understand you to say, that a slice of this mutton, or of that chicken, taste the same to you: or, to speak more correctly, have no taste?"

Josephine. "None whatever."

St. Aubin. "BILE!!!!!"

Camille, bribed by the hope of seeing Josephine every day, turned his mind seriously towards getting well; and, as his disorder had been lethargy, not disease, he improved visibly. But, as his body strengthened, some of the worst passions in our nature attacked him.

Fierce gusts of hate and love combined overpowered this man's high sentiments of honor and justice, and made him clench his teeth, and vow never to leave Beaurepaire without Josephine. She had been his four years before she ever saw Raynal, and she should be his forever. Her love would soon revive when they should meet every day, and —

Then conscience pricked him, and reminded him how and why Raynal had married her: for Laure had told him all. Should he undermine an absent soldier, whose whole conduct in this had been so pure, so generous, so unselfish?

But this was not all.

Strange to say, he was under a great personal obligation to his quondam comrade Raynal, of which more by and by.

Whenever this was vividly present to his mind, a great terror fell on him, and he would cry out in anguish: "Oh that some angel would come to me and tear me by force from this place!"

And the next moment passion swept over him like a flood, and carried away all his virtuous resolves. His soul was in deep waters; great waves drove it to and fro. Perilous condition, which seldom ends well.

Camille was a man in whom honor sat throned.

In no other earthly circumstance could he have hesitated an instant between right and wrong. But such natures, proof against all other temptations, have often fallen, and will fall, where sin takes the angel form of her they love. Yet, of all men, they should pray for help to stand: for, fallen, they still retain one thing that divides them from mean sinners.

Remorse, — the giant that rends the great hearts that mock at fear.

CHAPTER XXVI.

THE day came in which the doctor had promised his patient he should come down stairs. First his comfortable sofa was taken down into the saloon for his use: then the patient himself came down leaning on the doctor's arm, and his heart palpitating at the thought of the meeting. He came into the room: the baroness was alone. She greeted him kindly, and welcomed him. Laure came in soon after and did the same. But no Josephine. Camille felt sick at heart.

At last dinner was announced. "She will surely join us at dinner," thought he. He cast his eyes anxiously on the table: the napkins were laid for four only. The baroness carelessly explained this to him as they sat down.

"Madame Raynal dines in her own room. I am sorry to say she is indisposed."

Camille muttered polite regrets: the rage of disappointment drove its fangs into him, and then came the hollow aching of hope deferred. The next day he saw her, but could not get a word with her alone. The baroness tortured him another way. She was full of Raynal. She loved him. She called him her son: was never weary of descanting on his virtues to Camille. Not a day passed that she did not pester Camille to make a calculation as to the probable period of his return; and he was obliged to answer her. She related to him, before Josephine and Laure, how this honest soldier had come to them like a guardian angel and saved the whole family. In vain he muttered that Laure had told him.

"Let me have the pleasure of telling it you my way," cried she, and told it diffusely.

The next thing was, Josephine had received no letter from him this month, — the first month he had missed. In vain did Laure represent that he was only a few days over his time. The baroness became anxious, communicated her anxieties to Camille among the rest, and by a torturing interrogatory compelled him to explain to her before them all that ships do not always sail to a day, and are sometimes delayed. But oh! he writhed at the man's name; and Laure observed that he never mentioned it, nor acknowledged the existence of such a person as Josephine's husband, except when others compelled him. Yet they were acquainted, and Laure wondered that he did not sometimes detract or sneer.

"I should," said she, "I know I should."

"He is too noble," said Josephine, "and too wise. If he did, I should respect him less, and my husband more, — if possible."

Certainly Camille was not the sort of nature that detracts; but the reason he avoided Raynal's name was simply that his whole battle was to forget such a man existed. From this dream he was rudely awakened every hour since he joined the family, and the wound his self-deceiving heart would fain have skinned over was torn open. But worse than this was the torture of being tantalized. He was in company with Josephine, but never alone. Even if she left the room for an instant, Laure accompanied her and returned with her. Camille at last began to comprehend that Josephine had decided there should be no private interviews between her and him. Thus not only the shadow of the absent Raynal stood between them, but her mother and sister in person, and, worst of all, her own will.

"Cold-blooded fiend," he cried in his rage, "you never loved me; you never will really love any one."

Then the thought of all her tenderness and goodness came to rebuke him. But, even in rebuking, it maddened him. "Yes! it is her very nature to love; but, since she can make her heart turn whichever way her honor bids, she will love her husband. She does not now; but sooner or later she will, — then she will have children. He writhed with anguish and fury at this thought, — loving ties between him and her. He has everything on his side; I, nothing but memories she will efface from her heart. Will efface? She must have effaced them, or she could not have married him." He rose and went out into the Pleasance. He felt as if all must see the frightful tempest in his heart. He went into the Park, and wandered wildly. He was in that state in which men commit acts that

the next moment they look back on with wonder as well as horror.

He wandered and wandered by the side of the brook, and at each turn where the stagnant current showed a deeper pool than usual he stopped and looked, and thought, "How calm and peaceful you are!"

He sat down at last by the waterside, his eyes bent on a calm green pool.

"You are very calm and peaceful, and you could give me your peace. No more rage, — no more jealousy, — no more despair. It is a sordid death for a soldier to die who has seen great battles. When I was a boy, — ah! why cannot I be a boy again? — then I read of a Spartan soldier that was on a sinking ship. There was no hope, —no more there is for me. He drew his sword and fell on it ere the ship could sink. I can understand that man's heart. I am of his mind. Still we must do the best we can. Ah! what is this? my pistols. The present my old comrades sent me while I lay between life and death. Why did not I die then?

"No matter: I am glad I have got my pistols. How strange I should put them away into this coat, and put the coat on without knowing it. All these things are preordained.

"To go without a word with her, — a parting word. No! it is best so. For I should have taken her with me."

"Sir! colonel!" uttered a harsh, dry voice behind him.

Camille started.

Absorbed and strung up to desperation as he was, this voice seemed unnaturally loud, and discordant with his mood; a sudden trumpet from the world of small things.

Picard the notary stood behind him.

"Can you tell me where Madame Raynal is?"

"No. At the chateau, I suppose."

"She is not there: I inquired of the servant. She was out. You have not seen her, colonel?"

"I! no."

"Then perhaps I had better go back to the chateau and wait for her: stay, you are a friend of the family. Colonel, suppose I were to tell you, and ask you to tell Madame Raynal, or better still to tell the baroness, or Mademoiselle Laure."

"Monsieur," said Camille, coldly, "charge me with no messages, for I shall not deliver them. I am going another way."

"In that case, monsieur, I will go to the chateau once more."

"Go!"

Picard went, wondering at the colonel's strange manner.

Camille wondered that any one could be so mad as to talk to him about trifles, — to him a man standing on the brink of eternity. Poor soul, it was he who was mad and unlucky. He should have heard what Picard had to say. Notaries are not embarrassed, and hesitating to whom to speak, for nothing.

He watched Picard's retiring form. When he was out of sight then he turned round and resumed his thoughts as if Picard had been no more than a fly that had buzzed and then gone.

"Yes; I should have taken her with me." He sat gloomy and dogged like a dangerous maniac in his cell: never moved, scarce thought for more than half an hour: but his deadly purpose grew in him. Suddenly he started, a lady was at the stile, about a hundred yards distant. He trembled. It was Josephine.

She came towards him slowly, her eyes bent on the ground in a deep revery. She stopped about a stone's throw from him, and looked at the river long and thoughtfully: then casting her eyes around she caught sight of Camille. He watched her grimly. He saw her give a little start, and half turn round; but if this was an impulse to retreat, it was instantly suppressed: for the next moment she pursued her way.

Camille stood gloomy and bitter, awaiting her in silence. He planted himself in the middle of the path.

She looked him all over, and her color came and went.

"Out so far as this, Camille," she said, kindly. "Well done, but where is your cap?"

He put his hand to his head, and discovered that he was bareheaded.

"You will catch your death of cold. Come, let us go in and get your cap."

She made as if she would pass him. He planted himself right before her.

"No."

"Monsieur!"

"You shun me."

"No, I do not shun you, Camille."

"You shun me."

"I have avoided conferences that can lead to no good; it is my duty."

"You are very wise: cold-hearted people can be wise."

"Am I cold-hearted, Camille?"

"As marble."

She looked him in the face; the water came into her eyes: after a while she whispered:—

"Well, Camille, I am."

"But, with all your wisdom and all your coldness, you have made a mistake: you have driven me to despair."

"Heaven forbid!"

"Your prayer comes too late; you have done it."

"Camille, let me go to the oratory and pray for you. You terrify me."

"Useless. Heaven has no mercy for me. Take my advice, stay where you are,—don't hurry,—since what remains of your life you are to pass with me,—do you understand that?"

"Ah!"

"Can you read my riddle?"

"I can read your eyes, and I know you love me. I think you mean to kill me. Men kill the thing they love."

"Ay! sooner than another should have it, they kill it,—they kill it!"

"God has not made them patient like us women,—poor Camille!"

"Patience dies when hope dies. Come, Madame Raynal, say a prayer, for you are going to die."

"God bless you, Camille!" said the poor girl, putting her hands together.

Camille hung his head, then, lashing himself into fury, he cried:—

"You are my betrothed, you talk of duty,—but you forget your duty to me. Are you not my betrothed this four years? Answer me that."

"Yes, Camille."

"Did I not suffer death a hundred times for you, to keep faith with you, you cold-blooded traitress with an angel's face."

"O Camille, why do you speak so bitterly to me? Have I denied your right to kill me? You shall never dishonor me, but you shall kill me, if it is your pleasure. I do not resist. Why then speak to me like that,—must the last words I hear from your mouth be words of anger, cruel Camille?"

"I was wrong. But it is hard to kill her I love in cold blood. I want anger as well as despair to keep me to it; well, turn your head away from me."

"O no, Camille, let me look at you. Then you will be the last thing I shall see on earth."

He hesitated a moment: then, with a fierce stamp at his own weakness, he levelled a pistol at her.

She put up her hands, with a piteous cry:—

"O, not my face, Camille! pray do not disfigure my face! Here,—kill me here,—in my bosom,—my heart that loved you well, when it was no sin to love you."

"I can't shoot you. I can't spill your blood, Josephine."

"Poor Camille!"

"This will end all, and not disfigure your beauty, that has driven me mad, and cost you, poor wretch, your life."

"Thank you, dear Camille. The water does not frighten me as a pistol does,—it will not hurt me,—it will only kill me."

"No, it is but a plunge, and you will be at peace forever, — and so shall I. Come. Take my hand, Madame Raynal, — Madame Raynal, — Madame Raynal!"

"What, you too?" and she drew back. "O Camille, my poor mother! and Laure, who loves me so!"

"Ah! I forgot them."

He was silent a moment, then suddenly shrieked out: —

"Fly, Josephine, fly! escape this moment, that my better angel whispers to me. Do you hear? begone, while it is time."

"I will not leave you, Camille."

"I say you shall. Go to your mother and Laure, — go to those you love, and I can bear you to love. Go to the chapel, and thank Heaven for your escape."

"I will not go without you, Camille. I am afraid to leave you."

"You have more to fear if you stay.

"Well, I can't wait any longer. Stay, then, and learn from me how to love."

He levelled the pistol at himself.

Josephine threw herself on him with a cry, and seized his arm. They struggled fiercely. It was not till after a long and mighty effort that he threw her off. But he did throw her off, and raised the pistol rapidly to take his life.

But this time, ere the deadly weapon could take effect, she palsied his suicidal hand with a word: —

"No! I LOVE YOU!"

CHAPTER XXVII.

THERE lie the dead corpses of those words on paper; but O, my art is powerless to tell you how they were uttered, — those words, potent as a king's, that saved a life.

They were a cry of terror!

They were a cry of reproach!

They were a cry of love unfathomable!

The weapon shook in his hand. He looked at her with growing astonishment and joy.

She looked at him fixedly and anxiously, her hands clasped in supplication.

"Not as you used to love me!"

"More, far more. Give me the pistol. I love you, dearest! I love you!"

At these delicious words he lost all power of resistance; her soft and supple hand closed upon his, and gently withdrew the weapon and threw it into the water. "Good, Camille! — now give me the other."

"How do you know there is another?"

"You love me, Camille, — you never meant to kill me and spare yourself, — come."

"Josephine, I am so unhappy, — do not deceive me, — pray do not take this one from me, unless you really love me."

"I love you, — I adore you!"

She leaned her head on his shoulder, but with her hand she sought his, and even as she uttered those loving words she coaxed the weapon from his now unresisting grasp.

"There, it is gone, you are saved from death, — saved from worse, from crime." The danger over, she trembled for the first time, and sobbed hysterically.

He fell at her knees, and embraced them again and again, and begged her forgiveness in a transport of remorse and self-reproach.

She looked down with tender pity on him, and heard his cries of penitence and shame.

"I think only of what you have to suffer now."

"Let it come! it will fall light on me now. I thought I had lost your love."

"No, it will not fall light on you nor on me. Rise, Camille, and go home with me," said she, faintly.

"Yes, Josephine."

They went slowly and in silence. Camille was too ashamed and peni-

tent to speak, — too full of terror, too, at the abyss of crime from which he had been saved. The ancients feigned that a virgin could subdue a lion; they meant by this that a pure gentle nature can subdue a nature fierce but generous. Lion-like, Camille walked by Josephine's side with his eyes bent on the ground, a picture of humility and penitence.

"Camille, this is the last walk you and I shall take together."

"I know it. I have forfeited all right to be by your side."

"My poor friend, will you never understand me? You never stood higher in my esteem than at this moment. It is the avowal you have forced from me that parts us. The man to whom I have said, 'I —' must not remain beneath my husband's roof. Does not your sense of honor agree with mine?"

"Josephine," faltered Camille, "it does."

"To-morrow you must leave the chateau."

"Must I, Josephine?"

"What, you do not resist, you do not break my heart by complaints, by reproaches??"

"No, Josephine, — all is changed. I thought you unfeeling: I thought you were going to be *happy* with him, — that was what maddened me."

"Camille, I pray daily *you* may be happy, no matter how. But you and I are not alike, dear as we are to one another. Well, do not fear: I shall never be happy, — will that soothe you, Camille?"

"Yes, Josephine, all is changed, the words you have spoken have driven the fiends out of my heart. I have nothing to do now but to obey, you to command, — it is your right. Since you love me, dispose of me. Bid me live: bid me die: bid me stay: bid me go. I shall never disobey the angel who loves me, — my only friend upon the earth."

A single deep sob from Josephine was all the answer.

"Why did you not trust me, beloved one? Why did you not say to me long ago, 'I love you, but I am a wife; my husband is an honest soldier, absent, and fighting for France: I am the guardian of his honor and my own: be just, be generous, be self-denying; depart and love me only as angels love'? You gave me no chance of showing that I too am a person of honor."

"I was wrong, Camille. I think I should have trusted more to you. But who would have thought you could really doubt my love? You were ill: I could not bear you to go till you were well, quite well. I saw no other way to keep you but this, to treat you with feigned coldness. You saw the coldness, but not what it cost me to maintain it. Yes, I was unjust and inconsiderate, for I had many furtive joys to sustain me: I had you in my house under my care, — that thought was always sweet, — I had a hand in everything that was for your good, your comfort. I helped Jacintha make your soup and your chocolate every day. I lined your dressing-gown: I had always some little thing or other to do for you. These kept me up: I forgot in my selfishness that you had none of these supports, and that I was driving you to despair. I am a foolish, disingenuous woman: I have been very culpable. Forgive me!"

"Forgive you, angel of purity and goodness? I am alone to blame. What right had I to doubt your heart? I knew the whole story of your marriage, — I saw your sweet pale face, — but I was not pure enough to comprehend angelic virtue and unselfishness. Well, I am brought to my senses. God has been very good to me this day. He has saved me from — there is but one thing for me to do, — you bade me leave you to-morrow."

"I was very cruel."

"No! not cruel; wise. But I will be wiser. I shall go to-night."

"To-night, Camille?" cried Josephine, turning pale.

"Ay! for to-night I am strong, —

to-morrow I may be weak. To-night everything thrusts me on the right path. To-morrow everything will draw me from it. Do not cry, beloved one, — you and I have a hard fight: we must be true allies: whenever one is weak, then is the time for the other to be strong. I have been weaker than you, to my shame be it said: but this is my hour of strength. A light from heaven shows me my path. I am full of passion, but, like you, I have honor. You are Raynal's wife, — and — Raynal saved my life."

"Ah! is it possible? When? where? — may Heaven bless him for it!"

"So you see you were right, — this is no place for one so little master of himself as I am. I shall go to-night."

"It is so late, — too late to get a conveyance."

"I need none to carry my sword, my epaulets, and my love for you. I shall go on foot."

Josephine raised no more objections: she walked slower and slower.

"Thank you, beloved one," said Camille. And so the unfortunate pair came along creeping slowly with drooping heads towards the gate of the Pleasance. There their last walk in this world must end. Many a man and woman have gone to the scaffold with hearts less heavy and more hopeful than theirs.

"Dry your eyes, Josephine. They are all out on the Pleasance."

"No, I will not dry my eyes," cried Josephine, almost violently. "I care for nothing now."

The baroness, the doctor, and Laure, were all in the Pleasance; and as the pair came in every eye was bent on Josephine.

She felt this, and at another time it would have confused her; but the cold recklessness of despondency was on her. Camille, on the other hand, spite of his deep misery, felt a shudder of misgiving.

"They are all looking out for us," said he to himself: he had a vague, unreasonable fear that they suspected him; thought Josephine unsafe in his company. He stood with downcast eyes.

Nobody took any notice of him.

The baroness with a trembling voice said to Josephine: —

"Come with me, my poor child"; and drew her apart.

Laure followed them with her eyes bent on the ground.

The doctor paced up and down with a sad and troubled face.

Even he took no notice of Camille.

So at last Camille came to him, and said: —

"Monsieur, the time is come that I must once more thank you for all your goodness to me, and bid you farewell."

"What, are you going before your strength is re-established?"

"I am out of all danger, thanks to your skill."

"Colonel, at another time I should insist upon your staying a day or two longer; but now, — ah! colonel, you came to a happy house, but you leave a sad one. Poor Madame Raynal!!"

"Monsieur!"

"You saw the baroness draw her aside."

"Y-yes."

"By this time she knows all."

"Monsieur, you torture me. In Heaven's name! what do you mean?"

"I forgot; you do not know the calamity that has fallen upon our beloved Josephine, — on the darling of the house."

Camille turned cold with apprehension.

But he said faintly: —

"No; tell me! — for Heaven's sake, tell me!"

"My poor friend," said the doctor, solemnly, "HER HUSBAND IS DEAD!"

CHAPTER XXVIII.

CAMILLE realized nothing at first: he looked all confused in the doc-

tor's face, and was silent. Then after a while he said: —

"What? Who? Dead?"

"Raynal has been killed in action."

A red flush came to Camille's face, and his eyes went down to the ground at his very feet, nor did he once raise them while the doctor told him how the sad news had come.

"Picard the notary brought us the *Moniteur*, and there was poor Raynal among the killed in a cavalry skirmish; and, — oh! my friend, would you believe it? — there was another Raynal in this same action, — a Colonel Raynal. He was only wounded; but Commandant Raynal — our Raynal, our hero, our benefactor, our mainstay — must be killed. Ah! we are unfortunates! You share our sorrow, colonel? He was an old comrade of yours, — poor fellow!"

"*He saved my life.*"

Camille's eyes never left his feet.

"Excuse me, colonel; I must go to my poor friend the baroness. She had a mother's love for him who is no more, — well she might."

St Aubin went away, and left Dujardin standing there like a statue, his eyes still glued to the ground at his feet.

The doctor was no sooner out of sight, than Camille raised his eyes furtively, like a guilty person, and looked irresolutely this way and that: at last he went in and got his cap, then came out again and went back to the place where he had meditated suicide and murder: looked down at it a long while, — then looked up to heaven, — then fell suddenly on his knees, — and so remained till nightfall.

Then he came back to the chatean.

He said to himself: "And it is too late to go away to-night." He went softly into the saloon. Nobody was there but Laure and St. Aubin. At sight of him Laure rose and left the room. She returned in a few minutes, and rang the bell, and ordered some supper to be brought up for Colonel Dujardin.

"You have not dined," said she, coldly.

"I was afraid you were gone altogether," said the doctor. "He told me he was going this evening, Laure. You had better stay quiet another day or two," added he, kindly.

"Do you think so?" said Camille, timidly.

The baroness drew Josephine aside, and tried to break to her the sad news: but her own grief overcame her, and bursting into tears she bewailed the loss of her son. Josephine was greatly shocked. Death! — Raynal dead, — her true, kind friend dead, — her benefactor dead. She clung to her mother's neck, and sobbed with her. Presently she withdrew her face and suddenly hid it in both her hands.

She rose and kissed her mother once more, and went to her own room; and then, though there was none to see her, she hid her wet but burning cheeks in her hands.

Josephine confined herself for some days to her own room, leaving it only to go to the chapel in the park, where she spent hours in prayers for the dead and in self-humiliation. Her "tender conscience" accused herself bitterly for not having loved this gallant spirit more than she had.

Camille, too, was not free from self-reproach.

He said to himself: "Did I wish him dead? I hope I never formed such a thought! I don't remember ever wishing him dead." And he went twice a day to that place by the stream, and thought very solemnly what a terrible thing ungoverned passion is; and repented, — not eloquently, but silently, sincerely. But soon his impatient spirit began to torment itself again. Why did Josephine shun him now? Ah! she loved Raynal now that he was dead. Women love the thing they have lost; so he had heard say. In that case the very sight of him would of course be odious to her: he could understand that. The absolute unreasoning faith

he once had in her had been so rudely shaken by her marriage with Raynal, that now he could only believe just so much as he saw, and he saw that she shunned him.

He became moody, sad, and disconsolate; and as Josephine shunned him, so he avoided all the others, and wandered for hours by himself, perplexed and miserable. After a while, he became conscious that he was under a sort of surveillance. Laure de Beaurepaire, who had been so kind to him when he was confined to his own room, but had taken little notice of him since he came down, now resumed her care of him, and evidently made it her business to keep up his heart. She used to meet him out walking in a mysterious way, and, in short, be always falling in with him and trying to cheer him up, with very partial success.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Edouard Riviere retarded his cure by an impatient spirit; but he got well at last, and his uncle drove him in the cabriolet to his own quarters. He had received one letter from Laure, one from the baroness, and two from St. Aubin; and in these letters the news of the house had been told him, but, of course, in so vague and general a way that, thinking he knew all, in reality he knew nothing.

Josephine had married Raynal. The marriage was sudden, but no doubt there was an attachment: he believed in sudden attachments: he had some reason to. Colonel Dujardin, an old acquaintance, had come back to France wounded, and the good doctor had undertaken his cure: this incident appeared neither strange nor anyway important. What affected him most deeply was the death of Raynal, his personal friend and patron. But when his tyrants, as he called the surgeon and his uncle, gave him leave to go home, all feelings were overpowered by his great joy at the prospect of seeing Laure. He walked over to Beaurepaire, his arm in a sling, his heart beating. He was coming to receive the reward of all he had done, and all he had attempted. "I will surprise them," thought he. "I will see her face when I come in at the door: O happy hour! this pays for all." He entered the house without announcing himself; he went softly up to the saloon; to his great disappointment he found no one but the baroness; she received him kindly, but not with the warmth he expected. She was absorbed in her new grief. He asked timidly after her daughters. "Madame Raynal bears up, for the sake of others. You will not, however, see her: she keeps her room. My daughter Laure is taking a walk, I believe." After some polite inquiries, and sympathy with his accident, the baroness retired to indulge her grief, and Edouard thus liberated ran in search of his beloved.

He had not far to go.

He met her at the gate of the Pleasance, but not alone. She was walking with an officer, — a handsome, commanding, haughty, brilliant officer. She was walking by his side, talking earnestly to him.

An arrow of ice shot through young Riviere; and then came a feeling of death at his heart, a new symptom in his young life.

The next moment Laure caught sight of him. She flushed all over, and uttered a little exclamation, and she bounded towards him like a little antelope, and put out both her hands at once. He could only give her one.

"Ah!" she cried, with an accent of heavenly pity, and took his hand with both hers.

This was like the meridian sun coming suddenly on a cold place. His misgivings could not stand against it.

When Josephine heard he was come, her eye flashed, and she said, quickly: —

"I will come down to welcome him, — dear Edouard!"

The sisters looked at one another. Josephine blushed. Laure smiled and kissed her. She colored higher still.

When the time came, Josephine hesitated.

"I am ashamed to go down."

"Why?"

"Look at my face!"

"I see nothing wrong with it, except that it eclipses other people's: there is that inconvenience."

"O yes, dear Laure: look what a color it has, and a fortnight ago it was pale as ashes."

"Never mind; do you expect me to regret it?"

"Laure, I am a very bad woman!"

"Are you, dear? — hook this for me."

"Yes, love! But I sometimes think you would forgive me, if you knew how hard I pray to be better. Laure, I do try so to be as unhappy as I ought; but I can't, — I can't! My heart seems as dead to unhappiness, as once it was to happiness; am I a heartless woman, after all?"

"Not altogether," said Laure, dryly. "Fasten my collar, dear; and don't torment yourself. You have suffered much and nobly. It was Heaven's will: you bowed to it. It was not Heaven's will that you should be blighted altogether. Bow in this, too, to Heaven's will; take things as they come, and cease to try to reconcile feelings that are too opposite to live together."

"Ah! these are such comfortable words, Laure; but mamma will see this dreadful color in my cheek, and what can I say to her?"

"Ten to one it will not be observed; and, if it should, I will say it is the excitement of seeing Edouard. Leave all to me."

Josephine greeted Edouard most affectionately, drew from him his whole history, and petted him and sympathized with him deliciously, and made him the hero of the evening. Camille, who was not naturally of a jealous temper, bore this very well at first; but at last he looked so bitter at her neglect of him, that Laure took him aside to soothe him. Edouard, missing the auditor he most valued, and seeing her in secret conference with the brilliant colonel, felt a return of the jealous pangs that had seized him at first sight of the man: and so they played at cross-purposes.

At another period of the evening the conversation became more general, and Edouard took a dislike to Colonel Dujardin. A young man of twenty-eight nearly always looks on a boy of twenty-one with the air of a superior, and this assumption, not being an ill-natured one, is apt so be so easy and so undefined, that the younger hardly knows how to resent or to resist it. But Edouard was a little vain, as we know; and the colonel jarred him terribly. His quick, haughty eye jarred him. His regimentals jarred him: they fitted like a glove. His mustache and his manner jarred him; and, worst of all, his cool familiarity with Laure, who seemed to court him rather than be courted by him. He put this act of Laure's to the colonel's account, according to the custom of lovers, and revenged himself in a small way by telling Josephine in her ear, "that the colonel produced on his mind the effect of a puppy."

Josephine colored up, and looked at him with a momentary surprise: she said quietly: "Military men do give themselves some airs, — but he is very amiable at bottom, — at least so Laure says, — so they all say. You must make acquaintance with him, and then he will reveal to you his nobler qualities." "O, I have no particular desire," sneered Edouard. Josephine said nothing, but soon after she quietly turned Edouard over to St. Aubin, while she joined Laure, and under cover of her had a sweet, timid chat with her falsely accused.

This occupied the two so entirely, that Edouard made his adieus to the baroness, and marched off in dudgeon unobserved.

Laure missed him first, but said nothing.

When Josephine saw he was gone, she uttered a little exclamation, and looked at Laure. Laure put on a mien of haughty indifference, but the water was in her eyes.

Josephine looked sorrowful.

When they talked over everything together at night, she reproached herself. "We behaved ill to poor Edouard; we neglected him."

"He is a little, cross, ill-tempered fellow," said Laure, pettishly.

"O no! no!"

"And as vain as a peacock."

"Laure, in this house has he not some right to be vain?"

"Yes, — no. I am very angry with him. I won't hear a word in his favor," said Laure, pouting: then she gave his defender a kiss. "Yes, dear," said Josephine, answering the kiss, and ignoring the words, "he is a dear; and he is not cross, nor so very vain, poor boy, — now don't you see what it was?"

"No."

"Yes, you do, you little cunning thing: you are too shrewd not to see everything."

"No, indeed, Josephine, — do tell me, — don't keep me waiting?"

"Well then, — jealous!!"

"Jealous? O, what fun, — who of? Of Camille? Ha! ha! Little goose!"

"And, Laure, I almost think he would be jealous of any one that occupied your attention. I watched him."

"All the better, I'll torment my lord."

"Heaven forbid you should be so cruel."

"O, I will not make him unhappy, but I'll tease him a little: it is not in nature not to."

This foible detected in her lover, Laure was very gay at the prospect of amusement it afforded her.

And I think I have many readers who at this moment are awaiting unmixed enjoyment and hilarity from the same source.

"Ah!"

Edouard called the next day: he wore a gloomy air. Laure met this with a particularly cheerful one; on this Edouard's face cleared up, and he was himself again; agreeable as this was, Laure felt a little disappointed. "I am afraid he is not jealous, after all," thought she.

Josephine left her room this day and mingled once more with the family. The bare sight of her was enough for Camille at first; but after a while he wanted more. He wanted to be often alone with her, — but several causes co-operated to make her shy of giving him many such opportunities. First her natural delicacy coupled with her habit of self-denial, then her fear of shocking her mother, and lastly her fear of her own heart, and of Camille, whose power over her she knew. For Camille, when he did get a sweet word alone with her, seemed to forget everything except that she was his betrothed, and that he had come back alive to marry her. He spoke to her of his love with an ardor and an urgency that made her thrill with happiness, and at the same time shrink with a certain fear and self-reproach. Possessed with a feeling no stronger than hers, but single, he did not comprehend the tumult, the trouble, the daily contest in her heart. The wind seemed to him to be always changing, and hot and cold the same hour. Since he did not even see that she was acting in hourly fear of her mother's eye, he was little likely to penetrate her more hidden sentiments; and then he had not touched her key-note, — self-denial.

Women are self-denying and uncandid. Men are self-indulgent and outspoken.

And this is the key to a thousand double misunderstandings; for good women are just as stupid in misunderstanding men, as good men are in misunderstanding women.

To Camille, Josephine's fluctuations, joys, tremors, love, terror, modesty, seemed one grand total caprice. The component parts of it he saw not;

and her caprice tortured him almost to madness. Too penitent to give way again to violent passion, he fretted. His health retrograded, and his temper began to sour. The eye of timid love that watched him with maternal anxiety from under its long lashes saw this with dismay, — and Laure, who looked into her sister's bosom, devoted herself once more to soothe him without compromising Josephine's delicacy. Hence arose mystification No. 3. Riviere's natural jealousy being once awakened found constant food in the attention Laure paid Camille. The false position of all the parties brought about some singular turns. I give from their number one that forms a link, though a small one, in my narrative.

One day, Edouard found Laure alone in the Pleasance; she received him with a radiant smile, and they had a charming talk, a talk all about *him;* what the family owed him, etc.

On this, his late jealousy and sense of injury seemed a thing of three years ago, and never to return.

Jacintha came with a message from the colonel, "Would it be agreeable to Mademoiselle Laure to walk with him at the usual hour?"

"Certainly, said Laure."

As Jacintha was retiring Edouard called to her to stop a minute.

"May I beg you to reconsider that determination?" said he to Laure, politely.

"What determination?"

"To sacrifice me to this Colonel Dujardin?" still politely, only a little grimly.

Laure opened her eyes. "Are you mad?" inquired she, with quiet hauteur.

"Neither mad nor a fool," was the reply. "I love you too well to share your regard with any one, upon any terms; least of all upon these, that there is to be a man in the world, at whose beck and call you are to be, and at whose orders you are to break off an interview with me. Perdition!"

"Edouard, what folly! Can you suspect me of discourtesy, as well as of — I know not what. Colonel Dujardin will join us, that is all, and we shall take a little walk with him."

"Not I; I decline the intrusion: you are engaged with me, and I have things to say to you that are not fit for that puppy to hear. Choose therefore between me and him, and choose forever."

Laure colored, but smiled. "I should be very sorry to choose either of you forever, but for this afternoon I choose you."

"O, thank you, — my whole life shall prove my gratitude for this preference."

Laure beckoned Jacintha, and sent her with an excuse to Captain Dujardin. She then turned with an air of mock submission to Edouard. "I am at monsieur's *orders*."

Edouard, radiant with triumph, and naturally good-natured, thanked her again and again for her condescension in setting his heart at rest. He proposed a walk, since his interference had lost her one. She yielded a cold assent. This vexed him, but he took for granted it would wear off before the end of the walk. Edouard's heart bounded, but he loved her too sincerely to be happy unless he could see her happy too: the malicious thing saw this, or perhaps knew it by instinct, and by means of this good feeling of his she revenged herself for his tyranny. She tortured him as only a woman can torture, and as even she can torture only a worthy man, and one who loves her. In the course of that short walk this inexperienced girl, strong in the instincts and inborn arts of her sex, drove pins and needles, needles and pins, of all sorts and sizes, through her lover's heart.

She was everything by turns, except kind,—and nothing for long together. She was peevish, she was ostentatiously patient and submissive, she was inattentive to her companion, and seemingly wrapped up in contemplation of absent things and persons, the colonel, to wit. She was dogged,

repulsive, and as cold as ice; and she never was herself a single moment. They returned to the gate of the Pleasance. "Well, mademoiselle," said Riviere, very sadly, "that interloper might as well have been with us."

"Of course he might, and you would have lost nothing by permitting me to be courteous to a guest and an invalid. If you had not played the tyrant, and taken the matter into your own hands, I should have found means to soothe your zeal, your vanity: but you preferred to have your own way. Well, you have had it."

"Yes, mademoiselle, you have given me a lesson; you have shown me how idle it is to attempt to force a young lady's inclinations in anything. I shall not however offend again; for I am going away."

"O, are you?" She did not believe him.

"Yes, mademoiselle. I am sorry to say I am promoted."

"Sorry you are promoted?"

"I mean I was sorry this morning; because my new post is ten leagues from Beaurepaire; but now I am not sorry, for, were I to stay here, I foresee you would soon lose whatever friendly feeling you have for me."

"I am, then, very changeable. I am not considered so," remonstrated Laure, gently.

Riviere explained: "I am not vain, no man less so, nor am I jealous: but I respect myself, and I could never be content to share your time and your regard with Colonel Dujardin, or with a much better man."

"Monsieur," began Laure, angrily. Then she reflected. "Monsieur Edouard," said she, kindly, "if you were not going to leave us (only for a time, I trust), "I should be angry, and let you think — any nonsense, and so vex yourself and affront me monsieur: but it is no time for teasing you: my friend, be reasonable, — be just to yourself and me, — do not give way to ridiculous fancies: do not raise to a false importance this poor man, who is nothing to you, nothing to me, upon my honor."

"Dear Mademoiselle Laure," said Edouard, "see what this person, who, after your words, I am bound to believe is indifferent to you, has done. He has made me arrogant and imperious to you. Was I ever so before?"

"No! no! no! and I forgive you now, my poor friend."

"He has made you cold as ice to me?"

"No! that was my own wickedness and spitefulness."

"Wickedness, spitefulness! they are not in your nature. It is all this wretch's doing."

Laure sighed, but she said nothing: for she saw that to excuse Camille would only make the jealous one more bitter against him.

"Will you deign to write to me at my new post? once a month? in answer to my letters?"

"Yes, my friend. But you will ride over sometimes to see us."

"O yes: bat for some little time I shall not be able. The duties of a new post."

"I understand — well, then — in a fortnight or so?"

"Sooner perhaps, — *the moment that man is out of the house.*"

CHAPTER XXX.

"Laure, dear, you have not walked with him at all to-day."

"No: you must pet him yourself to-day. I hate the sight of him."

"What has he done?"

"He has done nothing: but it has made mischief between Edouard and me, my being so attentive to him. Edouard is jealous, and I cannot wonder. After all, what right have I to mystify him who honors me with his affection?"

Then, being pressed with questions by Josephine, she related to her all that had passed between Edouard and her, word for word.

Josephine. "Poor Camille!"

Laure. "O yes! poor Camille! who has the power to make us all miserable, and who does it, and will do it, until he is happy himself."

"Ah! would to Heaven I could make him as happy as he deserves to be."

"You could easily do that. And why not do it?"

"Laure, you know very well what sacred feelings withhold me. Laure, tell me, do you think it is really possible Camille does not really know my heart, and all the feelings that strive in it?"

"My sister, these men are absurd: they believe only what they see. I have done what I can for you and Camille; but it is useless. Would you have him believe you love him, you must yourself be kind to him; and it would be a charitable action, — you would make four unhappy people happy, or at least put them on the road: *now* they are off the road, and, by what I have seen to-day, I think, if we go on so a little longer, it will be too late to try to return. Come, Josephine, for my sake!"

"Ah! you say this out of kindness to me, — and to me alone."

"No, indeed, I am thinking of myself. He will make us all miserable for life if he is not made happy directly."

"If I thought that, I could almost consent."

"To be happy yourself?"

"I will remonstrate with him for his unkindness to me, — in being miserable."

"Josephine, I will go and tell him what you say."

"Stay, Laure."

"No! I will not stay. There, the crime is mine."

Laure returned the next minute.

"There," she cried, "he is going away."

Josephine started.

"Going away? Impossible!"

"Yes! he is in his room, packing up his things to go. I spied through the old place and saw him. He was sighing like a furnace as he strapped his portmanteau. I hate him, — but I was sorry for him. I could not help being."

Josephine turned pale, and lifted her hands in surprise and dismay.

"Depend on it, Josephine, we are wrong," said Laure, firmly: "these wretches will not stand our nonsense above a certain time, — and they are right. My sister, we are mismanaging: one gone, — the other going, — both losing faith in us."

Josephine's color returned to her cheek, and then mounted high. Presently she smiled, a smile full of conscious power and furtive complacency.

"He will not go."

Laure was pleased, but not surprised, to hear her sister speak so confidently, for she knew her power over Camille.

"That is right. Go to him, and say two words, 'I bid you stay.'"

"O Laure! no!"

"Poltroon! You know he would go down on his knees, and stay directly."

"No: I should blush all my life before you and him. I *could* not. I should let him go sooner, almost. O no! I will never ask a man to stay who wishes to leave me."

"Well! but you said just now —"

"Laure, dear, go to him, and say Madame Raynal is going to take a little walk: will he do her the honor to be her companion? Not a word more, if you love me."

"I go! Hypocrite!"

Josephine received Camille with a bright smile. She was in unusually good spirits, and overflowing with kindness and innocent affection. On this his gloomy brow relaxed, and all his prospects brightened as by magic. Then she communicated to him a number of little plans for next week and the week after. Among the rest he was to go with her and Laure to Frejus.

"Such a sweet place, Camille:

I must show it you. You will come?"

He hesitated a single moment: a moment of intense anxiety to the smiling Josephine.

"Yes! he would come,—it was a great temptation,—he saw so little of her."

"You will see more of me now, Camille!"

"Shall I see you every day,—alone, I mean?"

"O yes, if you wish it," replied Josephine, in an off-hand, indifferent way.

He seized her hand and devoured it with kisses.

"Foolish Camille!" murmured she, looking down on him with ineffable tenderness. "Should I not be always with you if I consulted my inclination? let me go."

"No! consult your inclination a little longer."

"Must I?"

"Yes; that shall be your punishment for—humph!"

"For what? What have I done?" asked she, with an air of great innocence.

"You have made me happy, me who adore you."

Josephine came in from her walk with a high color and beaming eyes.

"Run, Laure!"

On this concise, and to us not very clear instruction, Laure slipped up the secret stair. She saw Camille come in and gravely unpack his little portmanteau, and dispose his things in the drawers with soldierlike neatness, and hum an agreeable march.

She came and told Josephine.

"Ah!" said Josephine, with a little sigh of pleasure, and a gentle triumph in her eyes.

She had not only got her desire, but had arrived at it her way,—woman's way,—roundabout.

This adroit benevolence led to more than she bargained for.

She and Camille were now together every day: and their hearts, being under restraint in public, melted together all the more in their stolen interviews. Much that passed between these true lovers may well be left to the imagination.

At the third delicious interview Camille Dujardin begged Josephine to be his wife directly.

Have you noticed those half-tame deer that come up to you in a park so lovingly, with great tender eyes, and, being now almost within reach, stop short, and, with bodies fixed like statues on pedestals, crane out their graceful necks for sugar, or bread, or a chestnut, or a pocket-handkerchief? Do but offer to put your hand upon them, away they bound that moment twenty yards, and then stand quite still, and look at your hand and you, with great inquiring, suspicious, tender eyes.

So Josephine started at Camille's audacious proposal.

"Never mention such a thing to me again: or—or, I will not walk with you any more": then she thrilled with pleasure at the obnoxious idea, "she Camille's wife!" and colored all over,—with rage, Camille thought. He promised submissively not to renew the topic: no more he did till next day.

The interval Josephine had spent in thinking of it.

Therefore she was prepared to put him down by calm reasons. She proceeded to do so, gently, but firmly.

Lo and behold, what does he do, but meets her with just as many reasons, and just as calm ones; and urges them gently but firmly.

Heaven had been very kind to them: why should they be unkind to themselves? They had had a great escape: why not accept the happiness, as, being persons of honor, they had accepted the misery? with many other arguments, differing in other things, but agreeing in this, that they were all sober, grave, and full of common sense.

Finding him not defenceless on the score of reason, she shifted her ground and appealed to his delicacy.

On this he appealed to her love, and then calm reason was jostled off the field, and passion and sentiment battled in her place.

In these contests, day by day renewed, Camille had many advantages.

Laure, though she did not like him, had now declared on his side. She refused to show him the least attention. This threw him on Josephine; and when Josephine begged her to help reduce Camille to reason, her answer would run thus: —

"Hypocrite!" with a kiss: or else she would say, with a half-comic petulance: "No! no! I am on his side. Give him his own way or he will make us all four miserable."

Thus Josephine's ally went over to the enemy.

And then this coy young lady's very power of resistance began to give way. She had now battled for months against her own heart: first, for her mother; then, in a far more terrible conflict for Raynal, for honor and purity; and of late she had been battling, still against her own heart, for delicacy, for etiquette, things very dear to her, but not so great, holy, and sustaining as honor and charity that were her very household gods: and so, just when the motives of resistance were lowered, the length of the resistance began to wear her out.

For nothing is so hard to her sex as a long, steady struggle. In matters physical, this is the thing the muscles of the fair cannot stand.

In matters intellectual and moral, the long strain it is that beats them dead. Do not look for a Bacona, a Newtona, a Handella, a Victoria Huga.

Some American ladies tell us education has stopped the growth of these.

No! mesdames. These are not in nature.

They can bubble letters in ten minutes that you could no more deliver to order in ten days than a river can play like a fountain. They can sparkle gems of stories: they can flash little diamonds of poems. The entire sex has never produced one opera nor one epic that mankind could tolerate a minute: and why? — these come by long, high-strung labor. But, weak as they are in the long run of everything but the affections (and there giants), they are all overpowering while their gallop lasts. Fragilla shall dance any two of you flat on the floor before four o'clock, and then dance on till peep of day.

You trundle off to your business as usual, and could dance again the next night, and so on through countless ages.

She who danced you into nothing is in bed, a human jelly crowned with headache.

What did Josephine say to Laure one day? "I am tired of saying 'No! no! no! no! no!' for ever and ever to him I love." She added, combining two leading ideas in one phrase as it is not given the rude logical sex to do, "I am weary of all this cruelty."

But this was not all. She was not free from self-reproach. Camille's faith in her had stood firm. Hers in him had not. She had wronged him, first by believing him false, then by marrying another. One day she asked his pardon for this. He replied: —

"I have forgiven that, Josephine; but why not make me forget it?"

"I wish I could."

"You can. Marry me: then your relations with that man will seem but a hideous dream. I shall be able to say, looking at you my wife, — 'I was faithful, — I suffered something for her, — I came home, — she loved me still, — the proof is, she was my wife within three months of my return."

When he said that to her in the Pleasance, if there had been a priest at hand — In a word Josephine longed to show him her love, yet wished not to shock her mother, or offend her own sense of delicacy.

Camille cared for nothing but his love. To sacrifice love and happiness, even for a time, to etiquette, seemed

to him to be trifling with the substance of great things for the shadow of petty things; and he said so: sometimes sadly, sometimes almost bitterly.

Here then was a beleaguered fortress attacked with one will, and defended by troops one third of which were hot on the side of the besieger.

Here was a heart divided against itself, attacked by a single heart.

When singleness attacks division, you know the result beforehand. Why then should I spin words? I will not trace so ill-matched a contest, step by step, sentence by sentence; let me rather hasten to relate the one peculiarity that arose out of this trite contest, where, under the names of Camille and Josephine, the two great sexes may be seen acting the old world-wide distich,

"It 's a man's part to try,
And a woman's to deny," [for a while?]

Finding her own resolution oozing away, Josephine caught at another person.

She said to Camille, before Laure: —

"Even if I could bring myself to snatch at happiness in this indelicate way, — scarce a month after — oh!" — And there ended the lady's sentence. In the absence of a legitimate full stop, she put one hand before her lovely face to hide it, and so no more. But some two minutes after she delivered the rest in the form and with the tone of a distinct remark: "My mother would never consent."

"Yes, she would, if you could be brought to implore her as earnestly as I implore you."

"Would she, Laure?" asked Josephine, turning quickly to her sister.

"No, never! Our mother would look with horror on such a proposal. A daughter of hers to marry within a twelvemonth of her widowhood."

"There, you see, Camille."

"But, besides that, she loved Raynal."

"She has not forgotten him as we have, almost."

"Ungrateful creature that I am," sighed Josephine.

"She mourns for him every day. Often I see her eyes suddenly fill, — that is for him. Josephine's influence with mamma is very great: it is double mine: but if we all went on our knees to her, — the doctor and all, — she would never consent."

"There, you see, Camille; and I could not defy my mother, — even for you."

Camille sighed.

"I see everything is against me, even my love: for that love is too much akin to veneration to propose to you a clandestine marriage."

"O, thank you! bless you for respecting as well as loving me, dear Camille."

These words, uttered with gentle warmth, were some consolation to Camille, and confirmed him, as they were intended to do, in the above good resolution. He smiled.

"*Maladroit!*" cried Laure.

"Why *maladroit?*" asked Camille, opening his eyes.

"Let us talk of something else," replied Laure, coolly.

Camille turned red. He understood that he had done something very stupid, but he could not conceive what.

He looked from one sister to the other alternately. Laure was smiling ironically.

Josephine had her eyes bent demurely on a handkerchief she was embroidering.

That evening Camille drew Laure aside.

"Will you be so generous as to explain why you called me *maladroit?*"

"So it was," replied Laure, sharply.

But as this did not make the matter quite clear, Camille begged a little further explanation.

"Was it your part to make difficulties?"

"No, indeed."

"Was it for you to tell her a secret marriage would not be delicate? Do you think she will be behind you in

delicacy? or, that a love without respect will satisfy her? yet you must go and tell her you respected her too much to ask her to marry you secretly. In other words, situated as she is, you asked her not to marry you at all: she consented to that directly. What else could you expect?"

"*Maladroit!* indeed," said Camille, "but I would not have said it, only I thought—"

"You thought nothing would induce her to marry secretly, so you said to yourself, I will assume a virtue: I will do a bit of cheap self-denial! decline to the sound of trumpets what another will be sure to deny me if I don't,—ha! ha!—well, for your comfort, I am by no means so sure she might not have been brought to do *anything* for you, except openly defy mamma: but now of course."

Here this young lady's sentence ended: for there was a strong grammatical likeness between the sisters.

Camille was so disconcerted and sad at what he had done, that Laure began to pity him: so she rallied him a little longer in spite of her pity; and then all of a sudden gave him her hand and said she would try and repair the mischief.

He began to smother her hand with kisses.

"O," said she, "I don't deserve all that: I have a motive of my own: your unlucky speech will be quoted to me a dozen times,—never mind."

"Josephine, you will not be happy if you don't, no more will he."

Josephine sighed.

"You heard what he said?"

"O, that was only to please you. He thought nothing would tempt you to do so much for him."

"I would do anything for him but lose his respect, and make my mother unhappy."

"Well, love, you shall do neither: you shall scarcely move in the matter: only do not oppose me very violently, and all will be well."

"Ah! Laure! I know how you love me. Am I not fortunate to have a sister who loves me, and who is so shrewd? it is delightful—terrible, I mean—to have a little creature about one that reads one like this. What shall I do? What shall I do?"

"Yes, Josephine. It is very plain what we must do: we must conceal it from our mother."

"Marry, and hide my marriage from her who bore me?"

"We have concealed many things from her, dear, not to give her pain."

"Yes! but nothing like this. I don't know what to do."

"We must do the best we can under all the circumstances. Consider, his wound is healed. He must go back to the army: you have both suffered to the limits of mortal endurance. Is he to go away unhappy, in any doubt of your affection? are you to remain behind with misery of self-reproach added to the desolation of absence,—think."

"Dear Laure!! Find me some excuse for deceiving my mother."

"Do not say deceiving our mother, that is such a shocking phrase."

Laure then reminded Josephine of the day when Edouard had first told them a wise reticence was not the same thing as an immoral deceit. She reminded her, too, how after they had acted on his advice and always with good effect, how many anxieties and worries they had saved their mother,—by reticence. Josephine assented warmly to this.

Was there not some reason to think they had saved their mother's very life by these reticences? Josephine assented. "And, Josephine, you are of age, you are your own mistress, you have a right to marry whom you please; and, sooner or later, you will certainly marry Camille. I doubt whether even our mother could prevail on you to refuse him altogether. So it is but a question of time, and of giving our mother pain, or sparing her pain. She is old, our dear mother: she is prejudiced. Why shock her prejudices? She could not be brought

to understand the case: these things never happened in her day. Everything seems to have gone by rule then. Let us do nothing to worry her for the short time she has to live. Let us take a course between pain to her and cruelty to you and Camille."

These arguments went far to convince Josephine; for her own heart supported them. Then Camille put in his word: he proposed to the sisters to let him begin by entreating the baroness; and, if she should be inexorable, then for Josephine to marry him secretly.

"O no!" cried Josephine, "you shall ask her if you please, but if she says no (and she will say no), all is ended. It is much to take such a step without her sanction. Defy her I never will."

"Had you not better be silent, Colonel *Maladroit!*" said Laure, severely.

"Much better!" cried the gallant colonel, hastily, in mortal terror.

Having silenced the colonel, Laure pleaded his cause then and there so ably, that Josephine went from her solid objections to untenable ones, — a great point gained. She urged the difficulty, the impossibility of a secret marriage.

Camille burst into the conversation here: he undertook at once to overcome these imaginary difficulties.

"We will be married ten leagues from here."

"You will find no priest who will consent to do such a wicked thing as marry us without my mother's knowledge."

"O, as to that," said Laure, "you know the mayor marries people now-a-days."

"I won't be married without a priest," said Josephine, sharply.

"Nor I," said Camille. "I know a mayor who will do the civil forms for me, and a priest who will marry me in the sight of heaven, and both will keep it secret for love of me till it shall please Josephine to throw off this disguise."

"Who is the priest, Camille?" inquired Josephine, keenly.

"An old *curé;* he lives near Frejus; he was my tutor, and the mayor is the mayor of Frejus, also an old friend of mine."

"But what on earth will you say to them."

"That is my affair: I must give them some reasons which compel me to keep my marriage secret. O, I shall have to tell them some fibs, of course."

"There, look! — Camille! I will not have you tell fibs, — it lowers you."

"Of course it does; but you can't have secrecy without a fib or two."

"Fibs that will injure no one," said Laure, majestically.

From this day Camille began to act as well as to talk. He bought a light *calèche* and a powerful horse, and elected factotum Dard his groom. Camille rode over to Frejus and told a made-up story to the old *curé* and the mayor, and these his old friends believed every word he said, and readily promised their services and strict secrecy.

He told the young ladies what he had done.

Laure approved. Josephine shook her head; and, seeing matters going as her heart desired and her conscience did not quite approve, she suddenly affected to be next to nobody in the business, to be resigned, passive, and disposed of to her surprise by Laure and Camille, without herself taking any actual part in their proceedings.

At last the great day arrived on which Camille and Josephine were to be married at Frejus.

The mayor awaited them at eleven o'clock. The *curé* at twelve. The family had been prepared for this excursion by several smaller ones.

Laure announced their intention overnight.

"Mamma," said she, blushing a little, "Colonel Dujardin is good enough to take us to Frejus to-mor-

row. It is a long way, and we must breakfast early, or we shall not be back to dinner."

"Do so, my child. I hope you will have a fine day; and mind you take plenty of wraps with you in case of a shower."

"I will take care, mamma."

At seven o'clock the next morning Camille and the two ladies took a hasty cup of coffee together instead of breakfast, and then Dard brought the *calèche* round.

The ladies got in, and Camille had just taken the reins in his hand, when Jacintha screamed to him from the Hall: "Wait a moment, Colonel! wait a moment! The doctor! don't go without the doctor!" and the next moment Doctor St. Aubin appeared with his cloak on his arm, and, saluting the ladies politely, seated himself quietly in the vehicle before the party had recovered their surprise.

"Where shall we have the pleasure of taking you?" asked Camille, and gnawed his lip.

"To Frejus," was the reply.

Josephine quaked. Camille was devoured with secret rage; he lashed the horse and away they went.

It was a silent party. The doctor seemed in a revery. The others did not know what to think, much less to say. St. Aubin sat by Camille's side; so the latter could hold no secret communication with either lady.

Now it was not the doctor's habit to rise at this time of the morning; yet there he was, going with them to Frejus uninvited.

Josephine was in agony; had their intention transpired through some imprudence of Camille?

Camille was terribly uneasy. He concluded the secret had transpired through female indiscretion. Then they all tortured themselves as to the old man's intention. But what seemed most likely was, that he was with them to prevent a clandestine marriage by his bare presence, without making a scene and shocking Josephine's pride; and, if so, was he there by his own impulse? No, it was rather to be feared that all this was done by order of the baroness. There was a *finesse* about it that looked like a woman, and the baroness was very capable of adopting such a means as this to spare her own pride and her favorite daughter's. The clandestine is not all sugar. A more miserable party never went along, even to a wedding.

After waiting a long time for the doctor to declare himself, they turned desperate, and began to chatter all manner of trifles. This had a good effect; it roused St. Aubin from his revery, and presently to their great surprise he gave them the following piece of information: —

"I told you the other day that a nephew of mine was just dead. A nephew I had not seen for many years. Well, my friends, I received last night a hasty summons to his funeral."

"At Frejus?"

"No! at Paris! The invitation was so pressing, that I was obliged to go. The letter informed me a diligence passed through Frejus, at eleven o'clock, for Paris. Fortunately you were going to Frejus. I packed up a few changes of linen, and my MS., my work on entomology, which at my last visit to the capital all the publishers were mad enough to refuse; here it is. *Apropos*, has Jacintha put my bag into the carriage?"

On this a fierce foot-search, and the bag was found. Meantime Josephine leaned back in her seat with a sigh of thankfulness. She was more intent on not being found out than on being married. But Camille, who was more intent on being married than on not being found out, was asking himself, with fury, how on earth they should get rid of St. Aubin in time.

Well, of course, under such circumstances as these, the coach did not come to its time, nor till long after;

and all the while they were waiting for it they were failing their rendezvous with the mayor, and making their rendezvous with the curate impossible. But, above all, there was the risk of one or other of those friends coming up and blurting all out, taking for granted that the doctor must be in their confidence, or why bring him?

At last, at half past eleven o'clock, to their great relief, up came the coach. The doctor prepared to take his place in the interior, when the conductor politely informed him that the diligence stopped there a quarter of an hour.

"In that case, I will not abandon my friends," said the doctor, affectionately.

One of his friends gnashed his teeth at this mark of affection.

Josephine smiled sweetly.

At last he was gone; but it wanted ten minutes only to twelve.

Josephine inquired, amiably, whether it would not be as well to postpone matters to another day — meaning forever.

Camille replied by dragging them both very fast to the mayor.

That worthy received them with profound, though somewhat demure respect, and invited them to a table sumptuously served. The ladies, out of politeness, were about to assent, but Camille begged permission to postpone that part until after the ceremony.

At last, to their utter wonder, they were married. Then, with a promise to return and dine with the mayor, they went to the *curé*. Lo and behold, he was gone to visit a sick person. "He had waited a long time for them," said the servant.

Josephine was much disconcerted, and showed a disposition to cry. The servant, a good-natured girl, nosed a wedding, and offered to run and bring his reverence in a minute.

Presently there came an old, silvery-haired man, who addressed them all as his children, and seemed to mean it. He took them to the church, and blessed their union: and for the first time Josephine felt as if Heaven consented. They took a gentle farewell of him, and went back to the mayor's to dine; and at this stage of the business, Laure and Josephine had a sudden simultaneous cry, *apropos* of nothing that was then occurring.

This refreshed them, and they glowed at the mayor's table like roses washed with dew.

But O, how glad at heart they all were to find themselves in the carriage once more going home to Beaurepaire.

Laure and Josephine sat intertwined on the back seat: Camille, the reins in his right hand, nearly turned his back on the horse, and leaned back over to them, and talked with Laure, and looked at his wife ineffable triumph and tenderness.

The lovers were in Elysium, and Laure was not a little proud of her good management in ending all their troubles. Their mother received them back with great, and, as they fancied, with singular affection. She was beginning to be anxious about them, she said. Her kindness gave these happy souls a pang it never gave them before.

Since the above event scarce a fortnight had elapsed: but such a change. Camille sunburnt and healthy, and full of animation and confidence: Josephine beaming with suppressed happiness, and more beautiful than even Laure could ever remember to have seen her. For a soft halo of love and happiness shone around her head: a new and indefinable attraction bloomed on her face. She was a wife. Her eye, that used to glance furtively on Camille, now dwelt demurely on him, — dwelt on him with a sort of gentle wonder and surprised admiration as well as affection; and when he came or passed near her, a keen observer might just have seen her thrill.

She kept a good deal out of her mother's way: for she felt within that

her face must be too happy. She feared to shock her mother's grief with her radiance. She was ashamed of feeling unmixed heaven. But the flood of secret bliss she floated in bore all misgivings away. The pair were forever stealing away together for hours, and on these occasions Laure was to keep out of her mother's sight, until they should return. So then the new married couple could wander hand and hand through the thick woods of Beaurepaire, whose fresh green leaves were now just out, and hear the distant cuckoo, and sit on mossy banks, and pour love into one another's eyes, and plan ages of happiness, and murmur their deep passion and their bliss almost more than mortal: could do all this and more, without shocking propriety. These sweet duets passed for trios; for on their return Laure would be looking out for them, or would go and meet them at some distance, and all three would go up together to the baroness, as from a joint excursion. And then, when they went up to their bedrooms, Josephine would throw her arms round her sister's neck, and sigh: "It is not happiness, — it is beatitude!!"

Meantime the baroness mourned for Raynal. Her grief showed no decrease. Laure even fancied at times she wore a gloomy and discontented look as well: but on reflection she attributed that to her own fancy, or to the contrast that had now sprung up in her sister's beaming complacency.

Laure herself, when she found herself day after day alone for hours, was sad and thought of Edouard. And this feeling gained on her day by day.

At last one afternoon she locked herself in her own room, and after a long contest with her pride, which if not indomitable was next door to it, she sat down to write him a little letter. Now in this letter, in the place devoted by men to their after-thoughts, by women to their pretended after-thoughts, i. e. to what they have been thinking of all through the letter, she dropped a careless hint that all the party missed him very much, "*even the obnoxious colonel, who by the by has transferred his services elsewhere. I have forgiven him that, because he has said civil things about you.*"

Laure was reading her letter over again, to make sure that all the principal expressions were indistinct, and that the composition generally except the postscript resembled a Delphic oracle, when there was a hasty footstep, and tap at her door.

"Come in"; and in came Jacintha, excited.

"He is come, Mademoiselle Laure," cried she, and nodded her head like a mandarin, only more knowingly: then she added, "so you may burn the letter." For her quick eye had glanced at the table.

"Who is come?" inquired Laure, eagerly.

"Why, your one."

"My one?" asked the young lady, reddening, "my what?"

"The little one, — Edouard, — Monsieur Riviere."

"Monsieur Riviere!" cried Laure, acting agreeable surprise. "I am so glad. Why could you not say so: you use such phrases it is impossible to conjecture who you mean. I will come to Monsieur Riviere directly: mamma will be so glad."

Jacintha gone, Laure tore up the letter and locked up the pieces, — then tore to the glass.

Etc.

Edouard was so thoroughly miserable that he could stand it no longer: so in spite of his determination not to visit Beaurepaire while it contained a rival, he rode over to see whether he had not tormented himself idly: above all, to see the beloved face.

Jacintha put him into the *salle à manger*.

"By that you will see her alone," said the knowing Jacintha.

He sat down, hat and whip in hand, and wondered how he should be received.

In glides Laure, all sprightliness

and good-humor, and puts out her hand to him : the which he kisses.

"How could I keep away so long ?" asked he, vaguely, and self-astonished.

"How indeed, and we missing you so all the time !"

"Have *you* missed me ?" was the eager inquiry.

"O no !" was the cheerful reply, "but all the rest have."

Presently the malicious thing gave a sudden start.

"O, such a piece of news : you remember Colonel Dujardin, — the obnoxious colonel ?"

No answer.

"Transferred his attentions, sir, — fancy !"

"Who to ?"

"To Josephine and mamma. But such are the military. He only wanted to get rid of you : this done (through your want of spirit), he scorns the rich prize : so now I scorn *him*, — will you come for a walk ?"

"O yes !"

"We will go and look for my deserter. I say, tell me now : cannot I write to the commander-in-chief about this ? when all is done a soldier has no right to be a deserter, — has he ? tell me, you are a public man, and know everything, — except — ha ! ha !"

"Is it not too bad to tease me to-day ?"

"Yes ! but let me do it. I do like it so. Please, I have had few amusements of late."

"Yes, you shall tease me. I feel I deserve no mercy."

Formal permission to tease being conceded, she went that instant on the opposite tack, and began to tell him how she had missed him, and how sorry she had been anything should have occurred to vex their kind good friend. In short, Edouard spent a delightful day, for Laure took him one way to meet Josephine, who she knew was coming another. When the whole party assembled, the last embers of jealousy were quenched, for Josephine was a wife now and had already begun to tell Camille all her little innocent secrets ; and she had told him all about Edouard and Laure, and had given him his orders : so he treated Laure with great respect before Edouard ; but paid her no marked attention : also he was affable to Riviere, who, having ceased to suspect, began to like him.

In the course of the evening, the colonel also informed the baroness that he expected every day an order to join the army of the Rhine.

Edouard pricked his ears.

The baroness said no more than politeness dictated. She did not press him to stay, but treated his departure as a matter of course. Riviere rode home late in the evening in high spirits.

The next day, Laure varied her late deportment : she sang snatches of melody, going about the house : it was for all the world like a bird chirping. In the middle of one chirp Jacintha interfered. "Hush, mademoiselle, your mamma ! she is at the bottom of the corridor."

"What am I thinking of ?" said Laure, "to sing !"

"O, I dare say you know, mademoiselle," replied the privileged domestic.

A letter of good news came from St. Aubin. It was not for nothing that summons to his nephew's funeral.

The said nephew was a rich man and an oddity ; one of those who love to surprise folk, and hate to be foreseen and calculated upon. Moreover, he had no children, and detected his nephews and nieces being civil and attentive to him. "Waiting to cut me up !" was his generous reading of them. So with all this he turned restive, and made a will, and there defied, as far as in him lay, the laws of nature.

For he set his wealth a flowing backwards instead of forwards,

He handed his property up to an ancestor, instead of down to posterity.

All this the doctor related with

some humor, and in the calm spirit with which a genuine philosopher receives prosperity as well as adversity.

One little regret escaped him: that all this wealth, since it was to come, had not come one little half-year sooner.

All at Beaurepaire knew what their dear old friend meant.

He added that the affairs would be wound up by the lawyers, and it would take twelve months. He was, therefore, free; and they might expect him any day after this letter.

So here was another cause of rejoicing.

"I am so glad," said Josephine. "Now perhaps he will be able to publish his poor, dear Entomology, that the booksellers were all so unkind, so unfeeling about."

CHAPTER XXXI.

It was a fair morning in June: the sky was a bright, deep, lovely, speckless blue: the flowers and bushes poured perfume and sprinkled song upon the balmy air. On such a day, — so calm, so warm, so bright, so scented, so tuneful, — to live and to be young is to be happy. With gentle hand it wipes all other days out of the memory; it laughs, and clouds and rain and biting wind seem as far off and as impossible as grief and trouble.

Camille and Josephine had stolen out, and strolled lazily up and down close under the house, drinking the sweet air, fragrant with perfume and melody, the blue sky, and love.

Laure was in the house. She had missed them; but she thought they must be near: for they seldom took long walks early in the day. Meeting Jacintha on the landing of the great staircase, she asked her where her sister was.

"Madame Raynal is gone for a walk, Mademoiselle Laure."

"Alone?"

"O no, mademoiselle. She took the colonel with her. You know she always takes the colonel out with her now."

"That will do. You can finish your work."

Jacintha went into Camille's room.

Laure, who had looked as grave as a judge while Jacintha was present, bubbled into laughter. She even repeated Jacintha aloud and chuckled over them: "You know she always takes the colonel out with her now, — ha! ha! ha!"

"Laure!" cried a distant voice.

Laure looked round, and saw the baroness, at some distance in the corridor, coming slowly towards her, with eyes bent gloomily on the ground. Laure composed her features into a settled gravity, and went to meet her.

"I wish to speak with you, my daughter!"

"Yes, mamma."

"Let us sit down: it is cool here."

Laure ran and brought a seat without a back, but well stuffed, and set it against the wall. The old lady sat down and leaned back, and looked at Laure in silence a good while: then she said: —

"There is room for you; sit down, my youngest."

"Yes, dear mamma."

"I want to speak seriously to you."

"Yes, my mother: what is it?"

"Turn a little round, and let me see your face."

"There, mamma."

"Perhaps you can guess what I am going to say to you?"

"No! there are so many things."

"Well, I am going to put a question to you."

"Yes, mamma."

"I invite you to explain to me the most singular, the most unaccountable thing that ever fell under my notice. Will you do this for your mother?"

"O mamma, of course I will do anything to please you that I can:

but indeed I don't know what you allude to."

"I am going to tell you."

The old lady paused. The young one felt a chill of vague anxiety strike across her frame.

"Laure," said the old lady, speaking very gently but firmly, and leaning in a peculiar way on her words, while her eye worked like an ice gimlet on her daughter's face, "a little while ago, — when my poor Raynal — our benefactor — was alive — and I was happy — you all chilled my happiness by your gloom: the whole house seemed a house of mourning, — tell me now why was this?"

"Mamma!" said Laure, after a moment's hesitation, "we could hardly be gay. Sickness in the house! And if Colonel Raynal was alive, still he was absent, and in danger."

"O, then it was out of regard for him we were all dispirited?"

"Why not?" said Laure, faintly. She congratulated herself that her mother's suspicion was confined to past events.

"Good!" said the baroness. "In that case, tell me why is it that, ever since that black day when the news of his *death* reached us, the whole house has gone into black, and has gone out of mourning?"

"Mamma," stammered Laure, "what do you mean?"

"Even poor Camille, who was so pale and wan, has recovered like magic."

"O mamma, is not that fancy?"

"Humph? it may be, — or may not: but the rest is certain. I have seen the change: at first I doubted my senses, and that is why I said nothing. I waited to be sure, — and now I am sure. So tell me. Do you hesitate? Is it come to this, then? has my youngest secrets from her mother?"

"O mamma, — pray! pray! do not scold me! You will break my heart! Of what do you suspect me? Can you think I am unfeeling, ungrateful? I should not be *your* daughter!"

"My child," said the baroness, "I have not scolded you. On the contrary, I see you attempt sorrow as you put on black. My Laure is too right-minded not to do this."

"Thank you, mamma," said Laure, humbly.

"But, my poor child, you do it with so little skill that I see a horrible gayety breaking through that thin disguise: you are not true mourners: you are like the mutes or the undertakers at a funeral, forced grief on the surface of your faces, and frightful complacency below."

"Tra la! lal! la! la! Tra la! la! Tra la! la!" carolled Jacintha, in the colonel's room hard by.

The ladies looked at one another: Laure in great confusion.

"Tra la! la! la! Tra lal! lal! la! la! la!"

"Jacintha!" screamed Laure, angrily.

"Hush! not a word to her," said the baroness; and when Jacintha appeared on the threshold, in answer to the summons, she sent her down to do her own room.

"Why remonstrate with *her?* Servants are like chameleons: they take the tone of those they serve. Do not cry! I wanted your confidence, not your tears, love. There, I will not twice in one day ask you for your heart, it would be to lower the mother, and give the daughter the pain of refusing it, and the regret, sure to come one day, of having refused it. I will discover the meaning of it all myself. Kiss me, my youngest."

"O mamma! mamma!"

"There, the e, dry your eyes, and go out into the garden this fine day. I shall be sure to find it out without tormenting you any more, my beloved. Stay! you can tell all who respect *me*, it will be as well to *try* at least and mourn the death of my dear son."

"Yes, Camille, all is lovely, all is happy; but one sad thought *will* come. You will leave me."

"Not to-day."

"How like a soldier that is!"

"It is true," said Camille: "the fact is, we are seldom sure of a day: I mean when we are under arms."

"Must you go at all? Must you risk again the life on which my life depends?"

"My dear, that letter I received from head-quarters two days ago, that inquiry whether my wound was cured. A hint, Josephine, — a hint too broad for any soldier not to take."

"Camille, you are very proud," said Josephine, with an accent of reproach, and a look of approval.

"I am obliged to be. I am the husband of the proudest woman in France."

"Hush! not so loud: there is Dard on the grass."

"Dard!" muttered the soldier, with a world of meaning.

There was a sudden silence between the lovers. Camille broke it.

"Josephine," said he, a little peevishly, "how much longer are we to lower our voices, and turn away our eyes from each other, and be ashamed of our happiness?"

"Five months longer; is it not?" answered Josephine, quietly.

"Five months longer!!!"

"Is this just, Camille? Think of two months ago: yes, yes, two months ago, you were dying. You doubted my love, because it could not overcome my virtue and my gratitude; yet you might have seen it was destroying my life. Poor Raynal, my husband, my benefactor, died! Then I could do more for you, if not with delicacy, at least with honor; but no! words and looks, and tender offices of love, were not enough, I must give stronger proof. Dear Camille, I have been reared in a strict school: and perhaps none of your sex can know what it cost me to go to Frejus that day with him I love!"

"My own Josephine!"

"I made but one condition: that you would not rob me of my mother's respect: to her, such a marriage would appear monstrous, heartless. You consented to be secretly happy for six months. One fortnight has passed, and you are discontented again."

"O no! do not think so. It is every word true. I am an ungrateful villain!"

"You, Camille? how dare you say so? and to me! No! I have thought, and I have discovered the reason of all this, — you are a man!!!"

"So I have been told: but my conduct to you, sweet one, has not been that of a man from first to last. Yet I could die for you, with a smile on my lips. But when I think that once I lifted this sacrilegious hand against your life, — oh!"

"Do not be silly, Camille. I love you all the better for loving me well enough to kill me."

"The greater shame of me who am your husband, yet am —"

"Hush!"

"Discontented, — what a scoundrel!"

"I tell you, you foolish thing, you are a man: monseigneur is one of the lordly sex, that is accustomed to have everything quite its own way. My love, in a world that is full of misery, here are two that are condemned to be secretly happy a few months longer: a hard fate for one of your sex it seems; but it is so much sweeter than the usual lot of mine, that really I cannot share your misery"; and she smiled joyously.

"Then share my happiness, my dear wife."

"Hush! not so loud!"

"Why, Dard is gone, and we are out of doors, will the little birds betray us?"

"The lower windows are open, and I saw Jacintha in one of the rooms."

"Jacintha?!! we are in awe of the very servants!!! Well, if I must not say it loud, I will say it often," and, putting his mouth to her ear, he

poured a burning whisper of love into it: "My love! my angel! my wife! my wife! my wife!"

She turned her swimming eyes on him.

"My husband!" she whispered in return.

Laure came out and found them almost literally billing and cooing. She looked into their beaming faces, and said pettishly: —

"You *must not* be so happy, you two!"

"We can't help it."

"You must and shall help it; Josephine, our mother has reproached me with the joy she sees around her. She suspects."

"She has spoken to you? Your eyes are red. She has found me out?"

"No! not so bad as that. Come away from the house a little way, and I'll tell you."

"After all," said Laure, as soon as they got into the park, "why conceal the truth from her any longer? She will forgive us."

"Take care, Laure," said Camille, slyly, "I have just offended her by a word of the kind."

"How can I tell my mother that within six weeks of my husband's death — ?"

"Don't say your husband," put in Camille, wincing; "the priest never confirmed that union: words spoken before a magistrate do not make a marriage in the sight of Heaven."

Josephine cut him short.

"Amongst honorable men and women all oaths are alike sacred: and Heaven's eye is in a magistrate's room as in a church. A daughter of the house of Beaurepaire gave her hand to Captain Raynal, and called herself his wife. Therefore she was his wife, and is his widow. She owes him everything; the house you are all living in, among the rest. She ought to be proud of her brief connection with that pure, heroic spirit, and, when she is so little noble as to disown him, then say that gratitude and justice have no longer a place among mankind!"

"Come into the chapel," said Camille, with a voice that showed he was hurt.

They entered the chapel, and there they saw something that thoroughly surprised them. A marble monument to the memory of Raynal. It leaned at present against the wall below the place prepared to receive it. The inscription, short, but emphatic, and full of feeling, told of the battles he had fought in, including the last fatal skirmish, and his marriage with the heiress of Beaurepaire; and, in a few soldier-like words, the uprightness, simplicity, and generosity of his character.

The girls were so touched by this unexpected trait in Camille, that they threw their arms round his neck by one impulse.

"Am I wrong to be proud of him?" said Josephine, triumphantly. "You conquered yourself here, my brave soldier!"

"Do not praise me," said Camille, looking down confused. "One tries to be good; but it is very hard, — to some of us, — not to you, Josephine; and, after all, it is only the truth that we have written on that stone. Poor Raynal! he was my old comrade; he saved me from death, and not a soldier's death, — drowning; and he was a better man than I am, or ever shall be. Now he is dead, I can say these things. If I had said them when he was alive, it would have been more to my credit."

Further comment was cut short by two workmen, who came in with a pail of liquid cement, to place and fix the slab.

Camille and the ladies went back towards the house; and then, as praise seemed to make Camille uncomfortable, they naturally fell upon the other topic.

Laure told them all that had passed between the baroness and her. When Laure came to the actual details of that conversation, to the

words, and looks, and tones, Josephine's uneasiness rose to an overpowering height.

"We have underrated mamma's shrewdness. What shall I do?"

"Better tell her than let her find out," said Laure. "We must tell her some day."

At last, after a long and agitated discussion, Josephine consented; but Laure must be the one to tell all to the baroness.

"So, then, you at least will make your peace with mamma," argued Josephine, "and let us go in and do this before our courage fails; besides, it is going to rain, and it has turned cold. Where have all these clouds come from? An hour ago there was not one in the sky!"

They went, with hesitating steps and guilty looks, to the saloon. Their mother was not there. A reprieve.

Laure had an idea. "No, I will not tell her here. I will ask her to go out with me; and then I will take her to the chapel, and show her the monument, and then she will be so pleased with poor Camille: after that, when she is softened, I will begin by telling her all the misery you have both gone through; and, when she pities you, then I will show her it was all my fault your misery ended in a secret marriage."

"Ah, Laure! you are my guardian angel. I feel cold at what is coming: it is very good of you to make the plunge for us. After all, to-morrow must come! To-morrow we shall be no longer playing a part, and hiding our hearts from our dear mother. It will seem like a return to nature to be once more all open to her, as we used to be till this last twelvemonth."

Laure assented warmly to this, and the confederates sat there waiting for the baroness. At last, as she did not come, Laure rose to go to her. "When the mind is made up, it is no use being cowardly and putting off," said she, firmly. For all that, her cheek had but little color left in it when she left her chair with this resolve.

CHAPTER XXXII.

Now it happened as Laure went down the long *salon* to carry out their united resolve, that Jacintha looked in; and, after a hasty glance to see who was present, she waited till Laure came up to her, and then she drew a letter from under her apron and gave it her.

"A letter for my mistress," said she, with an air of mystery.

"Why not take it to her, then?"

"I thought you might like to see it first, mademoiselle," said she, with a quiet meaning.

"A letter for our mother, Josephine, that is all"

"Is it from the dear doctor?" asked Josephine.

"La, no, mademoiselle," said Jacintha: "don't you know the doctor is come home? Why, he has been in the house near an hour. He is with my lady."

The doctor entered the room at this very moment. Laure threw down the letter, and she and the whole party were instantly occupied in greeting him.

When they had all shaken hands with him, and welcomed him again and again, Laure remembered the letter, and took it up to carry to the baroness. Looking at it then more closely, she uttered an exclamation and beckoned the doctor hastily.

He came to her; and she put the letter into his hand.

He put up his glasses and eyed it.

"Yes!" whispered he, "it is from *him*."

Josephine and Camille saw something was going on: they joined the other two with curiosity in their faces.

Laure put her hand on a small table near her and leaned a moment. She turned half sick at a letter coming from the dead.

"My love! my Laure!" cried Josephine, with great concern, "what is the matter?"

"My poor friends," said the doctor, solemnly, "this is one of those fearful things that you have not seen in your short lives, but it has been more than once my lot to witness it. The ships that carry letters from distant countries vary greatly in speed, and are subject to detaining accidents. Yes! this is the third time I have seen a letter come written by a hand known to be cold. The baroness is a little excited to-day, I don't know from what cause. With your approbation, Madame Raynal, I will read this letter before I let her see it."

"Read it, doctor."

"Shall I read it out?"

"Certainly. There may be some wish expressed in it: and the last wishes of a hero are sacred."

Camille, from delicacy, retired to some little distance, and the doctor read the letter in a low and solemn voice.

"*My dear mother: — I hope all are well at Beaurepaire as I am, or I hope soon to be. I received a wound in our last skirmish: not a very severe one: but it put an end to my writing for some time.*"

"Poor fellow! it was his death-wound. Why, when was this written? — why?" and the doctor paused and seemed stupefied: "why, my dears, has my memory gone, or — " and again he looked eagerly at the letter, "for God's sake, what was the date of the battle in which he was killed: for this letter is dated the 15th of May. Is it a dream? — no! — this was written since his death."

"No, doctor," said Camille, hastily, "you deceive yourself."

"Why, what was the date of the *Moniteur*, then?" asked St. Aubin, in great agitation.

"Considerably later than this," said Camille.

"Well, but suppose it was, — you don't see, — the journal! the journal!"

"My mother has it locked up. I'll run."

"No, Laure, no one but me. Josephine, do not give way to hopes that may be delusive. But I tell you plainly, there are hopes. I must see that journal directly. Stay where you are. I will go to the baroness." He hurried out.

He was scarcely gone, when a cry of horror filled the room, a cry as of madness falling like a thunderbolt on a human mind.

It was Josephine, who, up to this, had not uttered one word. She stood, white as a corpse, in the middle of the room, and wrung her hands.

"What have I done? What shall I do? It was the third of May! I see it before me in letters of fire, — the third of May! the third of May! — and he writes the 15th."

"No! no!" cried Camille, wildly. "It was long, long after the third."

"IT WAS THE THIRD OF MAY!" repeated Josephine, in a hoarse voice, that none would have known for hers.

Camille ran to her with words of comfort and hope; he did not share her fears. He remembered about when the *Moniteur* came, though not the very day. He threw his arm lovingly round her, as if to protect her against these shadowy terrors. Her dilating eyes seemed fixed on something distant in space or time, — at some horrible thing coming slowly towards her. She did not see Camille approach her, but the moment she felt him she turned upon him swiftly.

"Do you love me, — you?" still in the hoarse voice that had so little in it of Josephine.

"O Josephine!"

"Does one grain of respect or virtue mingle in your love for me?"

"What words are these, my wife?"

"Then leave Raynal's house upon the instant. You wonder I can be so cruel? I wonder, too; and that I can see my duty so clear in one short moment! But, Camille, I have lived twenty years since that letter came.

Oh! my brain has whirled through a thousand agonies. But I have come back a thousand times to the same thing, — you and I must see each other's face no more."

Camille threw himself on his knees, and implored her to recall her words.

"Take care," she screamed, wildly, "I am on the verge of madness; is it for you to thrust me over the precipice? Come now, if you are a man of honor, if you have a spark of gratitude towards the poor woman who has given you all except her fair name, — that she will take to the grave in spite of you all, — promise that you will leave Raynal's house this minute, if he is alive, and let me die in honor, as I have lived."

"No, no!" cried Camille, terror-stricken; "it cannot be! Heaven is merciful; and Heaven sees how happy we are! Be calm; these are idle fears, — be calm; I say! Well, then, my poor saint, if it is so, I will obey you. I will stay, I will go, I will die, I will live. Whatever you bid me do, I will do, my poor Josephine!"

"Swear this to me by the thing you hold most sacred!"

"I swear by my love for you."

Agitated voices were heard at the door, and the baroness burst in, followed by the doctor, who was trying in vain to put some bounds to her emotion and her hopes.

"O my children! — my children!" cried she, trembling violently. "Here, Laure, my hands shake so; take this key, open the cabinet, there is the *Moniteur*. What is the date?"

"The 20th of May."

"There!" cried Camille. "I told you."

The baroness uttered a feeble moan. Her hopes died as suddenly as they had been born, and she sank drooping into a chair, with a bitter sigh.

Camille stole a joyful look at Josephine. She was in the same attitude, looking straight before her as at a coming horror. Presently Laure uttered a faint cry: "The battle was *before!*"

"To be sure," cried the doctor: "you forget, it is not the date of the paper, but of the battle it records. For God's sake, when was the battle?"

"The third of May," said Josephine, in a voice that seemed to come from the tomb.

Laure's hands that held the journal fell like a dead weight upon her knees. She whispered: —

"It was the third of May."

"Ah!" cried the baroness, starting up. "He may yet be alive! He must be alive! Heaven is merciful! Heaven would not take my son from me. A poor old woman who has not long to live. There was a letter! Where is the letter?"

"Yes, the letter! Where is it?" said the doctor. "I had it: it has dropped from my old fingers. I thought of nothing but the journal."

A short examination of the room showed the letter lying crumpled up near the door. Camille gave it to the baroness.

"Read! — read! no, not you, old friend! You and I are old: our hands shake, and our eyes are troubled: this young gentleman will read it to us: his eyes are not dim and troubled. O, something tells me that when *I* hear this letter, I shall find out whether my son lives! Why do you not read it to me, Camille?" cried she, almost fiercely.

Camille, thus pressed, obeyed mechanically, and began to read Raynal's letter aloud, scarce knowing what he did, but urged and driven by the baroness.

"My dear mother: — I hope all are well at Beaurepaire, as I am. I received a wound in our last skirmish, not a very severe one: but it stopped my writing for some time."

"Go on, dear Camille! go on."

"The page ends there, madame."

The paper was thin, and Camille, whose hand trembled, had some difficulty in detaching the leaves from one

another. He succeeded, however, at last, and went on reading and writhing.

"*By the way, you must address your next letter to me as Colonel Raynal. I was promoted just before this last affair, but had not time to tell you.*"

"There, there!" cried the baroness. "He was Colonel Raynal, and Colonel Raynal was not killed."

"Pray don't interrupt."

"No, my friend: go on, Camille, — why do you hesitate? what is the matter? do for pity's sake go on, sir."

Camille cast a look of agony around, and put his hand to his brow on which large drops of cold perspiration, like a death dew, were gathering; but, driven to the stake on all sides, he gasped on, rather than read: for his eye had gone down the page.

"*A namesake of mine, — Commandant Raynal —*"

"Ah!"

"*Has not been — so fortunate: he —*"

"Go on! go on!"

The wretched man could now scarcely utter Raynal's words: they came from him in a choking groan.

"*He was killed, — poor fellow! — while heading a gallant charge upon the enemy's flank.*"

The letter was ground convulsively; then it fell, all crumpled, on the floor.

"Bless you, Camille!" cried the baroness, — "bless you! bless you! I have a son still! Give me the precious letter!"

She stooped eagerly, took it up, and kissed it again and again.

"Your husband is alive! my son is alive! our benefactor is alive!"

Then she fell on her knees, and thanked Heaven aloud before them all. Then she rose and went hastily out, and her voice was heard crying very loud: —

"Jacintha! Jacintha!"

The doctor followed, fearful for the effects of this violent joy on so aged a person. The three remained behind, panting and pale like those to whom dead Lazarus burst the tomb, and came forth in a moment, — at a word. Then Camille half kneeled, half fell at Josephine's feet, and, in a voice choked with sobs, bade her dispose of him.

She turned her head away.

"Do not speak to me, do not look at me: if we look at one another, we are lost. Go! die at your post, and I at mine!"

He bowed his head, and kissed her dress, then he rose calm as despair and white as death, and, his knees knocking under him, he tottered away like a corpse set moving.

The baroness came back, triumphant and gay.

"I have sent her to bid them ring the bells in the village; the poor shall be feasted, — all shall share our joy, — my son was dead, and lives. O joy! joy! joy!"

"Mother!" shrieked Josephine.

"Madwoman that I am, I am too boisterous! help me, Laure! she is going to faint, — her lips are white!"

They brought a chair. They forced Josephine into it. She was not the least faint: yet her body obeyed their hands just like a dead body. The baroness burst into tears, tears streamed from Laure's eyes. Josephine's were dry and stony, and fixed on coming horror. The baroness reproached herself.

"Thoughtless old woman. It was too sudden: it is too much for my dear child. I, too, am faint now"; and she kneeled, and laid her aged head on her daughter's bosom, saying feebly through her tears, "too much joy, — too much joy."

Josephine took no notice of her. She sat like one turned to stone, looking far away over her mother's head with rigid eyes fixed on the air and on coming horrors.

Laure felt her arm seized. It was

St. Aubin. He, too, was pale now, though not before. He spoke in a terrible whisper to Laure, his eye fixed on the woman of stone that sat there.

"Is this joy?"

CHAPTER XXXIII.

Josephine Raynal is no stranger to you: most of you know more about her than about any other woman of your acquaintance. Bring your knowledge to my aid. Imagine, as the weary hours, and days, and weeks roll over her head, what this loving woman feels for her lover whom she has dismissed: what this grateful woman feels for the benefactor she has unwittingly wronged, — but will never wrong with her eyes open. What this woman, pure as snow, and proud as fire, feels at the appearance of frailty into which circumstances have betrayed her.

Put down the book a moment: shut your eyes: and imagine this strange form of human suffering.

Doctor St. Aubin received one day a note from a publishing bookseller, to inquire whether he still thought of giving the world his valuable work on insects. The doctor was amazed.

"My valuable work! Why, Laure, they all refused it, and this one in particular recoiled from me as if my insects could sting on paper."

The publisher went on to say: —

"*Studies of this class are gaining ground, and I think we might venture before the public.*"

This led to a correspondence, in which the convert to insects explained that the work must be published at the author's expense, the publisher contenting himself with the profits.

The author, thirsting for the public, consented.

Then the publisher wrote again to say that the work must be spiced. A little politics must be flung in: nothing goes down else

The author answered in some heat that he would not dilute things everlasting with the fleeting topics of the day, nor defile science with politics. On this his Mentor smoothed him down, despising him secretly for not seeing that a book is a matter of trade and nothing else. Brief, St. Aubin went to Paris to hatch his Phœnix.

He had not been there a week, when a small deputation called on him, and informed him he had been elected honorary member of a certain scientific society.

"Hallo!" thought he, and bowed as gentlemen used and as dancing masters use. Fair speeches on both sides! Exit deputation.

Next, invitations poured in. He accepted them. He shone at parties. Compliments were gracefully insinuated to his face. Science seemed really to be coming into fashion.

But when a lovely young woman or two began with the pliancy of their sex to find they had for many years secretly taken a warm interest in butterflies, — out of their own species, — the naturalist smelt a rat.

"I see," said he, "entomology, a form of idiocy in a poor man, is a graceful deviation of the intellect in a rich one."

Philosopher without bile, he saw through this, and let it amuse, not shock him. His species had another trait in reserve for him.

He took a world of trouble to find out the circumstances of his nephew's nephews and nieces: then he made arrangements for distributing a large part of his legacy among them. His intentions and the proportions of his generosity transpired.

Silent till now, they all fell to and abused him: each looking only at the amount of his individual share, not at the sum total the doctor was giving away to an ungrateful lot.

The donor was greatly amused, and noted down the incident and some of the remarks in his commonplace-book, under this head, "Man."

Paris is full of seductions, some of

them innocent. It netted the doctor, and held him fast.

He was disturbed from time to time by ill accounts of Josephine's health; and, if he had thought with the baroness that her illness was of the body, he would have come to her side at once: as it was, he hoped more from time than from drugs in her case; and, as he had a vague suspicion he was not desirous the baroness should share, he was rather disposed to keep out of her way.

He wrote, therefore, briefly and reservedly, assuring Madame de Beaurepaire that Madame Raynal had no organic disease, and would outgrow these fluctuations of health: he prescribed some mild tonics.

The despair of Josephine's mind was so terrible that Laure would gladly have compounded for a bodily illness: she feared for her sister's reason; and, though it added another anxiety, she was scarcely sorry when she discovered that symptoms which looked like bile attacked her frequently.

"I shall tell our mother of this."

"I would not tell her a word about it," observed Jacintha, quietly. She happened to be present.

"Why not? she has already noticed how ill my sister is."

"Mademoiselle Laure, take my advice, and don't go and worry her: it can do no good."

Jacintha spoke so firmly, and seemed so confident, that Laure drew her aside.

"Jacintha, I am so anxious about her: and perhaps our mother may know some remedy; she is more experienced than we are."

"There is no remedy wanted. You are making a fuss about nothing, mademoiselle."

"How do you know that, Jacintha? Did you ever see any one suffer as she does?"

"Plenty!"

"O Jacintha! be frank with me: did they die?"

"No."

"None of them?"

"Not one."

"Then there is no danger, you think?"

"Not an atom."

"Bless you for saying so, good Jacintha! And how confidently you speak: your tone and manner reassure me. Yet, after all, my poor Jacintha, you are not a doctor!"

"No, mademoiselle, but women in my way of life see a many things, and hear a many things, that don't come to a young lady's knowledge like you."

"Oh, do they?"

The above symptom disappeared: but a more serious cause of fear remained in Josephine's utter listlessness and frightful apathy: she seemed a creature descending inch by inch into the tomb. She shunned all company: even Laure's at times. She seldom spoke. One day she said, "not dead yet!" half to herself, and in such a tone, that Laure's heart died within her.

The house fell into silence and gloom.

Jacintha, naturally so bustling and cheerful, became silent, thoughtful, and moody. She had never been so affected by their former troubles. Laure caught her eye at times, dwelling with a singular expression of pity and interest on Josephine. "Good creature!" thought Laure, she sees my sister is unhappy, and that makes her more attentive and devoted to her than ever.

One day these three were together in Josephine's room. Josephine was mechanically combing her long hair, when, all of a sudden, she stretched out her hand and cried hastily: —

"Laure!"

Laure ran to her, and coming behind her saw in the glass that her lips were colorless. She screamed to Jacintha, and between them they supported Josephine to the bed. She had hardly touched it when she fainted dead away.

"Mamma! mamma!" cried Laure, in her terror.

"Hush!" cried Jacintha, "hold your tongue; it is only a faint. Help me loosen her, don't make any noise whatever."

They loosened her stays and applied the usual remedies, but it was some time before she came to. At last the color came back to her lips, then to her cheek, and the light to her eye. She smiled feebly on Jacintha and Laure.

"I have been insensible, have I not?"

"Yes, love, and frightened us — a little — not much — O dear! O dear!"

"Don't be alarmed, sweet one, — I am better."

"Now may I go and tell mamma?" asked Laure.

"No! mademoiselle," was Jacintha's reply. "What makes you so bent on tormenting my mistress?"

"But, Jacintha, I am frightened: it is not as if my sister was subject to fainting fits. I never saw her faint but once before."

"And I will never do it again, since it frightens you." Then Josephine said to her sister, in a low voice and in the Italian language: "I hoped it was Death, my sister; but he comes not to the wretched."

"If you hoped that!" replied Laure, in the same language, "you do not love your poor sister who so loves you."

While the Italian was going on, Jacintha's dark eyes glanced suspiciously on each speaker in turn. But her suspicions were all wide of the mark.

"Now may I go and tell mamma?"

"No, mademoiselle! Madame Raynal, do take my side, and forbid her."

"Why, what is it to you?" said Laure, sharply.

"If it was not something to me, should I thwart my dear young lady?"

"No. And you shall have your own way, if you will but condescend to give me a reason."

This to some of us might appear reasonable, but not to Jacintha: it even hurt her feelings.

"Mademoiselle," she said, "when you were little and used to ask me for anything, did I ever say to you, 'Give me a reason first'?"

"There! she is right. We should not make terms with tried friends. Come, we will pay her devotion this compliment. It is such a small favor."

"And I shall take it as a great one."

"Enough: we will not tell our mother."

Laure acquiesced, but with a sigh.

"I did so hope that all our concealments from her were ended: but now we have begun concealing, something keeps always happening to make us go on.

"Well, one comfort, Doctor St. Aubin will be here next month, and then I shall tell him; there is no objection to that, I suppose."

"What day does the doctor come?" was all Jacintha's answer.

"We don't know yet: but he will write first."

An improvement took place in Josephine's health about this time. A slight tint came to her cheek, and faint and fitful glows to her heart. The powers of life in her received a support: she was conscious of it. She said one day to Laure:—

"My sister, I no longer wish to die: is it not strange? Something seems to bid me live. Is Heaven strengthening me to suffer more?"

"No, my sister," said Laure; "time is blunting your anguish! And it is for my sake you wish to live, bless you!—for mine, who would follow you to the tomb, my best beloved of all the world!"

"Yes, Laure, you love your poor sister too well. I fear you love me better than you do Edouard."

"He has no troubles! Yes, my poor patient saint, my life seems to me too small a thing to give you."

"It is very consoling to be loved so," sobbed Josephine. "Oh that none other but you had ever loved me! I have caused the despair of one who loved me well, too. O my sister! — my sister!"

This was the only time she had ever alluded for months past to Camille. She guarded the avenues of her heart, poor soul! She fought for her purity as sternly, as keenly, as heroes ever fought for glory, or martyrs for truth.

Josephine's appearance improved still more. Her hollow cheeks recovered their plump smoothness, and her beauty its bloom, and her person grew more noble and statue-like than ever, and within she felt a sense of indomitable vitality. Her appetite had for some months been excessively feeble and uncertain, and her food tasteless; but of late by what she conceived to be a reaction such as is common after youth has shaken off a long sickness, her appetite had been not only healthy but eager.

The baroness observed this, and it relieved her of a large portion of her anxiety. One day at dinner her maternal heart was so pleased with Josephine's performance, that she took it as a personal favor.

"Well done, my daughter! that gives your mother pleasure to see you eat again. Soup and *bouillon:* and now twice you have been to Laure for some of that *paté*, which does you so much credit, Jacintha."

Josephine colored high at this compliment.

"It is true," said she, "I eat like a pig"; and, with a furtive glance at the said *paté*, she laid down her knife and fork, and ate no more of anything.

"The doctor will be angry with me," said the baroness. "I have tormented him away from Paris, and when he comes he will find her as well as ever."

"Madame the baroness," said Jacintha, hastily, "when does the doctor come, if I may make so bold, that I may get his room ready?"

"Well thought of, Jacintha. He comes the day after to-morrow in the afternoon."

At night when the young ladies went up to bed, what did they find but a little cloth laid on a little table in Josephine's room, and the remains of the *paté* she had liked. Laure burst out laughing: —

"Look at that dear duck of a goose, Jacintha! Our mother's flattery sank deep; she thinks we can eat her *paté's* at all hours of the day and night. Shall I send it away?"

"No!" said Josephine; "that would hurt her culinary pride, and perhaps her affection: only cover it up, dear: for just now I am not in the humor: it rather turns my stomach."

It was covered up. The sisters retired to rest. In the middle of the night, pitch dark, Josephine rose, groped her way to the *paté*, and ate it to the last mouthful: polished the plate; then to bed again, tranquillized.

The large tapestried chamber, once occupied by Camille Dujardin, was now turned into a sitting-room, and it was a favorite room on account of the beautiful view from the windows. It had also a large side window looking westward, as well as four windows looking south: and this suited the baroness; her sight was dim.

Josephine sat there alone with some work on a certain day in her hand: but the needle often stopped, and the fair head drooped.

She heaved a deep sigh.

To her surprise it was echoed by a sigh that, like her own, seemed to come from a heart full of sighs.

She turned hastily round, — it was Jacintha.

Josephine, as we know, had a woman's eye for reading faces, and she was instantly struck by two things, by a certain gravity in Jacintha's gaze, and a flutter which the young woman

was suppressing with tolerable but not complete success.

Disguising the uneasiness this discovery gave her, she looked Jacintha full in the face, and said mildly, but a little coldly : —

" Well, Jacintha ? "

Jacintha lowered her eyes, and muttered slowly : —

" The doctor — comes — to - day." Then raised her eyes all in a moment to take Josephine off her guard, — but the calm face was impenetrable. So then Jacintha added, " to our misfortune," throwing in still more meaning.

" To our misfortune ? What, dear old friend, — what do you mean ? "

" It is not so easy to say what I mean ! "

" And it is impossible for me to divine it, my poor Jacintha ! "

" Madame," said the other, firmly, " do not jest, I entreat you ! the case is too serious. That old man makes me shake. You are never safe with him. So long as his head is in the clouds, you might take his shoes off, and on he 'd walk and never know it ; but every now and then he comes out of the clouds all in one moment, without a word of warning, and when he does his eye is on everything, like a bird's. Then he is so old. He has seen a heap. Take my word for it, the old are more knowing than the young, let them be as sharp as you like : the old have seen everything. *We* have only heard talk of the most part, with here and there a glimpse. To know life to the bottom, you must live it out, from the soup to the dessert ; and that is what the doctor has done, and now he is coming here."

" Well, and what follows ? "

" Mademoiselle Laure will go telling him everything : and, if she tells him half what there is to tell, your secret will be no secret."

" My secret ! " gasped Josephine, turning pale.

" Don't look so, madame ! — don't be frightened at poor Jacintha. Sooner or later, you *must* trust somebody besides Mademoiselle Laure."

Josephine looked at her with inquiring, frightened eyes.

" Mademoiselle ! — I beg pardon, madame, — I carried you in my arms when I was a child. When I was a girl you toddled at my side, and held my gown, and lisped my name ; and used to put your little arms round my neck, and kiss me, you would. Ah, mademoiselle, I wish those days could come back ! "

" Ah ! would they could ! — would they could ! "

" And if ever I had the least pain, or sickness, your dear little face would turn as sorrowful, and all the pretty color leave it for Jacintha ; and now you are in trouble, in sore trouble, — but you turn away from me, you dare not trust me, that would be cut in pieces ere I would betray you ! Mademoiselle, you are wrong. The poor can feel : they have all seen trouble, and a servant is the best of friends where she has the heart to love her mistress ! and do not I love you ? Ah, mademoiselle ! do not turn from her who has carried you in her arms, and laid you to sleep upon her bosom, many 's and many 's the time."

Josephine panted audibly. She held out her hand eloquently towards Jacintha, but she turned her head away, and trembled.

Jacintha cast a hasty glance round the room. Then she trembled too at what she was going to say, and the effect it might have on the young lady. As for Josephine, terrible as the conversation had become, she made no attempt to evade it, for she must learn how far Jacintha had penetrated her secret.

Jacintha, in a hurried, quivering voice, hissed into Josephine's ear these words : —

" When the news of Colonel Raynal's death came, you wept, but the color came back to your cheek. When the news of his life came, you turned to stone. Ah ! my poor young lady, there has been more between you and *that man* than should be. Ever since one day you all went to Frejus to-

gether you were a changed woman. I have seen you look at him, as — as a wife looks at her man. I have seen *him* — "

"Hush! Jacintha. Do not tell me what you have seen, — oh! do not remind me of joys I pray God to help me forget. He was my husband, then! — O cruel Jacintha, to remind me of what I have been: of what I am, — ah me! ah me! ah me!"

"Your husband!!" muttered Jacintha, in utter amazement.

Then Josephine drooped her head on this faithful creature's shoulder, and told her with many sobs the story I have told you; she told it very briefly, for it was to a woman, who, though little educated, was full of feeling and shrewdness, and needed but the bare facts: she could add the rest from her own heart and experience: could tell the storm of feelings through which these two unhappy lovers must have passed. Her frequent sighs of pity and sympathy drew Josephine on to pour out all her griefs. When the tale was ended, she gave a sigh of relief.

"It might have been worse," said Jacintha: "I thought it was worse, — the more fool I — I deserve to have my head cut off!"

It was Josephine's turn to be amazed.

"It could have been worse!" said she. "How? tell me," added she, bitterly. "It would be a consolation to me, could I see that."

Jacintha colored and evaded this question, and begged her to go on, — to keep nothing back from her. Josephine assured her she had revealed all. Jacintha looked at her a moment in silence.

"It is then as I half suspected."

"What?"

"You do not know all that is before you. You do not see why I am afraid of that old man?"

"No: not of him in particular."

"Nor why I want to keep Mademoiselle Laure from talking too much to him?"

"No! Jacintha, be not uneasy. Laure is to be trusted. She is wise, — wiser than I am."

"You are neither of you wise. You know nothing. Ah! my poor young mistress, you are but a child still. You have a deep water to wade through," said Jacintha, so solemnly that Josephine trembled. "A deep water, and do not see it even. You have told me what is past; now I must tell you what is coming; Heaven help me!"

Josephine trembled.

"Give me your dear hand to hold, mademoiselle, if you believe I love you!"

"There, dear Jacintha."

She trembled.

"Have you no misgiving?"

"Alas! I am full of them: at your words, at your manner, they fly around me in crowds."

"Have you no *one*?"

"No!"

"Turn your head from me a bit, my sweet young lady: I am an honest woman, though I am not so innocent as you, and I am forced against my will to speak my mind plainer than I am used to."

Then followed a conversation, to detail which might anticipate our story; suffice it to say that it gave Josephine another confidante.

Laure, coming into the room rather suddenly, found her sister weeping on Jacintha's bosom, and Jacintha crying and sobbing over her.

Doctor St. Aubin, on his arrival, was agreeably surprised at Madame Raynal's appearance.

"She looks much as usual," said he. "She is even grown a little. How is your appetite, my child?"

"Very good, doctor."

"O, as to her appetite," cried the baroness, "it is immense."

"Indeed!"

"It was," explained Josephine, "just when I began to get better; but now it is much as usual." This answer had been arranged beforehand

by Jacintha. She added: "The fact is, we wanted to see you, doctor, and my ridiculous ailments were a good excuse for tearing you from Paris."

"And now we have succeeded," said Laure, "let us throw off the mask and talk of other things, — above all, of Paris and your *éclat*."

"For all that," persisted the baroness, "she was ill when I first wrote, and very ill, too."

"Madame Raynal," said the doctor, solemnly, "your conduct has been irregular, to say the least: once ill, and your illness announced to your medical adviser, you had no right to get well, but by his prescriptions. As, then, you have shown yourself unfit to conduct a malady, it becomes my painful duty to forbid you henceforth ever to be ill at all, without my permission first obtained in writing."

This badinage was greatly relished by Laure: but not at all by the baroness.

The doctor stayed a month at Beaurepaire, then off to Paris again; and being now a rich man, and not too old to enjoy innocent pleasures, he got into a habit of running backwards and forwards between the two places, spending a month or so at each, alternately. So the days rolled on. Josephine fell into a state that almost defies description. Her heart was full of deadly wounds; yet this seemed, by some mysterious, half-healing balm, to throb and ache, but bleed no more.

Beams of strange, unreasonable complacency would shoot across her: the next moment reflection would come; she would droop her head, and sigh piteously. Then all would merge in a wild terror of detection.

She seemed on the borders of a river of bliss, — bliss, new, divine, and inexhaustible; and on the other bank mocking, malignant fiends dared her to enter that heavenly stream.

Nature was strong in this young woman: and at this part of her eventful career Nature threw herself with giant force into the scale of life. The past to her was full of regrets; the future full of terrors, and empty of hope. Yet she did not, could not, succumb. Instead of the listlessness and languor of a few months back, she had now more energy than ever; at times it mounted to irritation. An activity possessed her: it broke out in many feminine ways. Among the rest she was seized with what we men should call a cacoethes of the needle; "a raging desire" for work. Her fingers itched for work. She was at it all day. As devotees retire apart to pray, so she to stitch.

On a wet day she would slip into the kitchen, and ply the needle beside Jacintha: on a dry day she would hide in the old oak-tree, and sit like a mouse, and ply the tools of her craft, and make things of no mortal use to man or woman; and she tried little fringes of muslin upon her white hand, and held it up in front of her, and smiled, and then moaned. It was winter, and Laure used sometimes to bring her out a thick shawl, as she sat in the old oak-tree, stitching, but Josephine nearly always declined it. She was impervious to cold.

Then, her purse being better filled than formerly, she visited the poor more than ever, and, above all, the young couples: and took a warm interest in their household matters, and gave them muslin articles of her own making, and sometimes sniffed the soup in a young housewife's pot, and took a fancy to it, and, if invited to taste it, paid her the compliment of eating a good plateful of it, and said it was better soup than the chateau produced; and thought so; and whenever some peevish little brat set up a yell in its cradle, and the father shook his fist at the destroyer of his peace, Madame Raynal's lovely face filled with concern, not for the sufferer, but the yeller, and she flew to it and rocked it and coaxed it and con-

soled it, and the young housewife smiled, and stopped its mouth by other means. And, besides the five-franc pieces she gave the infants to hold, these visits of Madame Raynal were always followed by one from Jacintha with a basket of provisions on her stalwart arm, and honest Sir John Burgoyne peeping out at the corner. Kind and beneficent as she was, her temper deteriorated a little; it came down from angelic almost to human. Laure and Jacintha were struck with the change, assented to everything she said, and encouraged her in everything it pleased her caprice to do.

Meantime the baroness lived on her son Raynal's letters (they came regularly twice a month).

Laure too had a correspondence, a constant source of delight to her.

Edouard Riviere was posted at a great distance, and could not visit her; but their love advanced nevertheless rapidly. Every day he wrote down for his Laure the acts of the day, and twice a week sent the budget to his sweetheart, and told her at the same time every feeling of his heart. She was less fortunate than he; she had to carry a heavy secret; but still she found plenty to tell him, and tender feelings too to vent on him in her own arch, shy, fitful way. Letters can enchain hearts; it was by letters that these two found themselves imperceptibly betrothed.

Their union was looked forward to as certain, and not very distant. Meantime, it was always a comfort and a joy to slip out of sight and chat to the beloved one on paper. On this side, at least, all was bright.

One day, Dr. St. Aubin, coming back from Paris to Beaurepaire rather suddenly, found nobody at home but the baroness. Josephine and Laure were gone to Frejus, — had been there more than a week. She was ailing again: so, as Frejus had agreed with her once, Laure thought it might again.

"I will send for them back now you are come."

"No!" said the doctor, "why do that? I will go over there and see them."

Accordingly, a day or two after this, St. Aubin hired a carriage and went off early in the morning to Frejus. In so small a place he expected to find the young ladies at once; but, to his surprise, no one knew them or had heard of them. He was at a nonplus, and just about to return home and laugh at himself and the baroness for this wild-goose chase, when he fell in with a face he knew, one Mivart, a surgeon, a young man of some talent, who had made his acquaintance in Paris. Mivart accosted him with great respect; and, after the first compliments, informed him that he had been settled some months in this little town, and was doing a fair stroke of business.

"Killing some, and letting Nature cure others, — eh! monsieur?" said the doctor.

Mivart grinned. The doctor then revealed in general terms the occasion that had brought him to Frejus.

"Are they pretty women, your friends? I think I know all the pretty women about," said Mivart, with unpardonable levity.

"They are not pretty," replied St. Aubin.

Mivart's interest in them faded visibly out of his countenance.

"But they are beautiful. The elder might pass for Venus, and the younger for Hebe."

"I know them!" cried he: "they are patients of mine."

The doctor colored.

"Ah, indeed!"

"In the absence of your greater skill," said Mivart, politely, "it is Madame St. Aubin and her sister you are looking for, is it not?"

"Madame St. Aubin?"

"Yes! and how stupid of me not to know by the name who you were inquiring for."

"It is a curious coincidence, certainly: but it happens to be a Ma-

dame Raynal I am looking for, and not a Madame St. Aubin."

"Madame Raynal? don't know her."

Mivart then condoled with the doctor for this, that Madame St. Aubin was not the friend he was in search of.

"She and her sister," said he, "are so lovely they make one ill to look at them: the deepest blue eyes you ever saw, both of them: high foreheads, teeth like ivory mixed with pearl, such aristocratic feet and hands, and their arms — oh!" and, by way of general summary, the young surgeon kissed the tips of his fingers, and was silent: language succumbed under the theme.

The doctor smiled coldly.

"If you had come an hour sooner, you might have seen Mademoiselle Laure; she was in the town."

"Mademoiselle Laure? who is that?"

"Why, Madame St. Aubin's sister."

"Hum! where do these paragons live?"

"They lodge at a small farm: it belongs to a widow: her name is Roth."

They parted.

Doctor St. Aubin walked slowly towards his carriage, his hands behind him; his eyes on the ground. He bade the driver inquire where the Widow Roth lived, and learned it was about half a league out of the town. He drove to the farm-house: when the carriage drove up, a young lady looked out of the window, on the first floor. It was Laure de Beaurepaire. She caught the doctor's eye, and he hers. She came down and welcomed him. She was all in a flutter.

"How did you find us out?"

"From your medical attendant," said the doctor, dryly.

Laure looked keenly in his face.

"He said he was in attendance on two paragons of beauty, — blue eyes, white teeth and arms."

"And you found us out by that?" inquired Laure, looking still more keenly at him.

"Hardly; but it was my last chance of finding you, so I came. Where is Madame Raynal?"

"Come into this room, dear friend. I will go and find her."

Full twenty minutes was the doctor kept waiting, and then in came Laure, gayly crying: —

"I have hunted her high and low, and where do you think my lady was? Sitting out in the garden, — come."

Sure enough, they found Josephine in the garden, seated on a low chair. She smiled when the doctor came up to her, and asked after her mother. There was an air of languor about her; her color was clear, delicate, and beautiful.

"You have been unwell, my child?"

"A little, dear friend: you know me: always ailing, and tormenting those I love."

"Well! but, Josephine, this place and this sweet air always sets you up. Look at her now, doctor; did you ever see her look better?"

"Yes."

"How can you say so? See what a color. I never saw her look more lovely."

"I never saw her look *so* lovely: but I have seen her look better. Your pulse, my child! A little languid?"

"Yes, I am a little."

"Do you stay at Beaurepaire?" inquired Laure; "if so, we will come home."

"You will stay here another fortnight," said the doctor, authoritatively.

"Prescribe some of your nice tonics for me, doctor," said Josephine, coaxingly.

"No! I can't do that: you are in the hands of another practitioner."

"What does that matter? You were at Paris."

"It is not the etiquette in our profession to interfere with another man's patients."

"O dear! I am so sorry," began Josephine.

"I see nothing here that my good friend Mivart is not competent to deal with," said the doctor, interrupting her.

Then followed some general conversation, at the end of which the doctor once more laid his commands on them to stay another fortnight where they were; and he bade them good by.

When he was gone, Laure went to the door of the kitchen, and called out, "Madame Jouvenel! Madame Jouvenel! you may come into the garden again!"

The doctor drove away: but, instead of going straight to Beaurepaire, he ordered the driver to return to the town. He then walked to Mivart's house.

He was an hour and three quarters closeted with Mivart.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

Edouard Riviere contrived one Saturday night to work off all arrears of business, and start for Beaurepaire. He had received a very kind letter from Laure, and his longing to see her overpowered him. On the road his eyes often glittered and his cheek flushed with expectation. At last he got there. His heart beat; for four months he had not seen her. He ran up into the drawing-room, and there found the baroness alone; she welcomed him cordially, but soon let him know Laure and her sister were at Frejus. His heart sank. Frejus was a long way off. But this was not all. Laure's letter was dated from Beaurepaire, yet it must have been written at Frejus. He went to Jacintha, and demanded an explanation of this. The ready Jacintha said it looked as if she meant to be home directly.

"That is a hint for me to get their rooms ready," said Jacintha.

"This letter must have come here enclosed in another," said Edouard, sternly.

"Like enough," replied Jacintha, with an appearance of sovereign indifference.

Edouard looked at her. "I will go to Frejus."

"So I would," said Jacintha, faltering a little, but not perceptibly: "you might meet them on the road, — if so be they come the same road, — there are two roads, you know."

Edouard hesitated; but he ended by sending Dard to the town on his own horse with orders to leave him at the inn and borrow a fresh horse. "I shall just have time," said he. He rode to Frejus and inquired at the inns and the post-office for Mademoiselle de Beaurepaire. They did not know her: then he inquired for Madame Raynal. No such name known. He rode by the seaside upon the chance of their seeing him, — no! He paraded on horseback throughout the place in hopes every moment that a window would open, and a fair face shine at it, and call to him, — no! At last his time was up, and he was obliged to ride back — sick at heart — to Beaurepaire. He told the baroness with some natural irritation what had happened. She was as much surprised as he was.

"I write to Madame Raynal at the post-office, Frejus," said she.

"And Madame Raynal gets your letters?"

"Of course she does, since she answers them; you cannot have inquired at the post."

"Madame, it was the first place I inquired at, and neither Mademoiselle de Beaurepaire nor Madame Raynal were known there."

Both parties were positive, and Jacintha, who could have given the clew, seemed so puzzled herself, that they did not even apply to her. Edouard took a sorrowful leave of the baroness, and set out on his journey home.

Oh! how sad and weary that ride seemed now by what it had been,

coming. His disappointment was deep and irritating, and, ere he had ridden half-way, a torturer fastened on his heart. That torture is called suspicion; a vague and shadowy, but gigantic phantom, that oppresses and rends the mind more terribly than certainty. In this state of vague, sickening suspicion he remained some days: then came an affectionate letter from Laure, who had actually returned home. In this she expressed her regret and disappointment at having missed him; blamed herself for misleading him, but explained that their stay at Frejus had been prolonged from day to day far beyond her expectation. "The stupidity of the post-office was more than she could account for," said she. But what went furthest to console Edouard was that after this *contretemps* she never ceased to invite him to come to Beaurepaire. Now before this, though she said many kind and pretty things in her letters, she had never invited him to visit the chateau; he had noticed this. "Sweet soul," thought he, "she really is vexed. I must be a brute to think any more about it. Still—" So this wound was skinned over.

At last, what he called his lucky star ordained that he should be transferred to the very post his Commandant Raynal had once occupied. He sought and obtained permission to fix his quarters in the little village near Beaurepaire. This arrangement could not be carried out for three months; but the prospect of it was joyful all that time,—joyful to both lovers. Laure needed this consolation, for she was very unhappy. Her beloved sister since their return from Frejus had fallen into a state that gave her hourly sorrow and anxiety. The flush of health was gone from Josephine's cheek, and so was her late energy.

She felt back into deep depression and languor, broken occasionally by fits of nervous irritation.

She would sit for hours together at one window. Can the reader guess which way that window looked? Laure trembled for two things,—her life and her reason. But Edouard would come: he was a favorite of Josephine: he would help to distract her attention from those sorrows which a lapse of years alone could cure.

On every account, then, Edouard's visit was looked forward to with hope and joy.

He came. He was received with open arms. He took up his quarters at his old lodgings, but spent his evenings, and every leisure hour, at the chateau.

He was very much in love, and showed it. He adhered to his Laure like a leech; and followed her about like a little dog, and was always happy at the bare sight of her.

This would have made her very happy if she had had nothing great to distract her attention and her heart; but she had Josephine, whose deep depression and fits of irritation and terror filled her with anxiety; and so Edouard was in the way now and then. On these occasions he was too vain to see what she was too polite to show him offensively.

On this she became vexed at his obtuseness.

"Does he think I can be always at his beck and call?" said she.

"She is always after her sister," said he.

He was just beginning to be jealous of Josephine, when the following incident occurred:—

Laure and the doctor were discussing Josephine. Edouard pretended to be reading a book, but he listened to every word.

At last, Dr. St. Aubin gave it as his opinion that Madame Raynal did not make enough blood.

"Oh! if I thought that!" cried Laure.

"Well, then, it is so, I assure you."

"Doctor," said Laure, "do you remember, one day you said blood could be drawn from young veins and poured into old ones?"

"I don't remember saying so, but it is a well-known fact."

"And healthy blood into a sick patient?"

"Certainly."

"I don't believe it."

"Then you place a very narrow limit to science," said the doctor, coldly.

"Did you ever see it done?" asked Laure.

"I have not only seen it done, but have done it myself!"

"Then do it for us. There's my arm, take blood from that for dear Josephine!" and she thrust a white arm out under his eye with such a bold movement and such a look of fire and love as never beamed from common eyes!

A keen, cold pang shot through the human heart of Edouard Riviere.

The doctor started and gazed at her with admiration; then he hung his head.

"I could not do it. I love you both too well to drain either of life's current."

Laure veiled her fire, and began to coax.

"Once a week: just once a week, dear, dear doctor: you know I should never miss it. I am so full of that health which Heaven denies to her I love."

"Let us try milder measures first," said the doctor. "I have most faith in time."

"What if I were to take her to Frejus: hitherto the sea has always done wonders for her."

"Frejus by all means," said Edouard, mingling suddenly in the conversation; "and this time I will go with you, and then I shall find out where you lodged before, and how the boobies came to say they did not know you."

Laure bit her lip. It flashed across her just then how much Edouard was in her way and Josephine's. Their best friends are in the way of those who have secrets. Presently the doctor went to his study. Edouard began in a mock soliloquy.

"I wonder whether any one will ever love me well enough to give a drop of their blood for me!"

"If you were in sickness and sorrow,—who knows?"

"I would soon be in sickness and sorrow if I thought that."

"Don't jest with such matters, monsieur."

"I don't jest. I wish I was as ill as Madame Raynal is, to be loved as she is."

"You must resemble her in other things to be loved as she is."

"You have often made me feel that of late, dear Laure."

This touched her. She fought down the kindly feeling.

"I am glad of it," said she, out of perverseness. She added after a while: "Edouard, you are naturally jealous!"

"Not the least in the world, Laure, I assure you. I have many faults but jealous I am not."

"You are, and suspicious, too: there is something in your character that alarms me for our happiness."

"There are things in your conduct, Laure, I could wish explained."

"There! I told you so. You have not confidence in me."

"Pray don't say that, dear Laure. I have every confidence in you: now don't ask me to divest myself of my senses and my reason."

"I don't ask you to do that or anything else for me,—*au plaisir*."

"Where are you going now? he! he! I never can get a word of peace with you."

"I am going up stairs to my sister."

"Poor Madame Raynal, she makes it very hard for me not to dislike her."

"Dislike my Josephine?" and Laure bristled visibly.

"She is an angel, but I should hate an angel if it came forever between you and me."

"Excuse me, she was here long before you. It is you that come between her and me."

"I came because I was told I should

be welcome," said Edouard, bitterly, and equivocating a little: he added, "and I dare say I shall go, when I am told I am one too many."

"Bad heart! who says you are one too many in the house? But you are too *exigeant*, monsieur: you assume the husband, and you tease me. It is selfish: can you not see I am anxious and worried? you ought to be kind to me, and soothe me: that is what I look for from you, and, instead of that, you are a never-ending worry."

"I should not be if you loved me as I love you. I give *you* no rival. Shall I tell you the cause of all this? You have secrets."

"What secrets?"

"Is it me you ask? am I trusted with them? Secrets are a bond that nothing can overcome. It is to talk secrets you run away from me to Madame Raynal."

"Well," said Laure, coolly, "and who taught me?"

"Colonel Dujardin?"

Laure was taken quite aback: she misunderstood for a moment the direction of Edouard's jealousy. He eyed her with swelling suspicion. She let him go on this wrong tack awhile. By and by she said: "Was it Colonel Dujardin who taught me *reticence?* I thought it had been yourself."

"Do I deserve this sarcasm? The reticence that springs from affection is one thing: that which comes from the want of it is another. Where did you lodge at Frejus, mademoiselle the Reticent?"

"In a grotto, dry at low water, monsieur the Inquisitive."

"That is enough, since you will not tell me, I will find it out before I am a week older."

"Monsieur, I thank you for playing the tyrant a little prematurely: it has put me on my guard. Let us part! we are not suited to each other."

"Part! Laure? that is a terrible word to pass between you and me. Forgive me! I suppose I am jealous."

"You are, — you are actually jealous of my sister. Well, I tell you plainly I love you: but I love my sister better. I never could love any man as I do her: it is ridiculous to expect it."

"And you think I could bear to play second fiddle to her all my life?"

"I don't ask you. Go and play first trumpet with some other lady."

"You speak your wishes so plainly now, I have nothing to do but to obey."

He kissed her hand, and went away disconsolately.

Laure, instead of going to Josephine, her determination to do which had mainly caused the quarrel, sat sadly down, and leaned her head on her hand.

"I am cruel! I am ungrateful! he has gone away broken-hearted! and what shall I do without him? — little fool! I love him better than he loves me. He will never forgive me! I have wounded his vanity, — and they are vainer than we are! If we meet at dinner, I will be so kind to him, he will forget it all. No! Edouard will not come to dinner. He is not a spaniel that you can beat, and then whistle back again. Something tells me I have lost him; and, if I have, what shall I do? I will write him a note. I will ask him to forgive me!"

She sat down at the table, and took a sheet of note-paper and began to write a few conciliatory words. She was so occupied in making these kind enough, and not too kind, that a light step approached her unobserved. She looked up and there was Edouard. She whipped the paper off the table.

A spasm of suspicion crossed Edouard's face.

Laure caught it.

"Well," said she.

"Dear Laure, I came back to beg you to forget what passed just now."

Laure's eye flashed: his return

showed her her power. She abused it directly.

"How can I forget it if you come reminding me?"

"Dear Laure, now don't be so unkind, so cruel, — I have not come back to tease you, sweet one. I come to know what I can do to please you: to make you love me again?"

"I'll tell you. Don't come near me for a month."

Edouard started from his knees, white as ashes with mortification and wounded love.

"This is how you treat me for humbling myself, when it is you that ought to ask forgiveness!"

"Why should I ask what I don't care about?"

"What *do* you care about? — except that sister of yours. You have no heart. And on this cold-blooded creature I have wasted a love an empress might have been proud of inspiring! I pray God some man may sport with your affections, you heartless creature, as you have played with mine, and make you suffer what I suffer now!"

And with a burst of inarticulate grief and rage he flung out of the room.

Laure sank trembling on the sofa a little while: then with a mighty effort rose and went to comfort her sister.

Edouard came no more to Beaurepaire.

There is an old French proverb, and a wise one, *Rien n'est certain que l'imprévu:* it means you can make sure of nothing but this, that matters will not turn as you feel sure they will; and for this reason you, who are thinking of suicide because trade is declining, speculation failing, bankruptcy impending, or your life going to be blighted forever by unrequited love, — *don't do it!* — whether you are English, American, French, or German, listen to a man that knows what is what, and *don't do it.* Why not? because none of those horrors will affect you as you are prophesying they will. The joys we expect are not so bright, nor the troubles so dark, as we fancy they will be. Bankruptcy coming is one thing, come is quite another: and no heart or life can be really blighted at twenty years of age. The love-sick girls, that are picked out of the canal alive, marry another man, have eight brats, and screech with laughter when they think of sweetheart, and probably blockhead, No. 1, for whom they were fools enough to wet themselves, let alone kill themselves. This happens *invariably.* The love-sick girls, that are picked out of the canal dead, have fled from short-lived memory to eternal misery, from guilt that time never failed to cure to anguish incurable. In this world *rien n'est certain que l'imprévu.*

Edouard and Laure were tender lovers, at a distance. How much happier and more loving they thought they should be beneath the same roof. They came together. Their prominent faults of character rubbed: the secret that was in the house did its work: and, altogether, they quarrelled.

Dard had been saying to Jacintha for ever so long, "When granny dies, I will marry you."

Granny died. Dard took possession of her little property. Up came a glittering official, and turned him out. He was not her heir. Perrin the notary was her heir. He had bought the inheritance of her two sons, long since dead.

Dard had not only looked on the cottage and cow as his, but had spoken of them for years. The disappointment, and the irony of his comrades, ate into him.

"I will leave this cursed place!" said he.

Josephine instantly sent for him to Beaurepaire. He came, and was factotum, with the novelty of a fixed salary. Jacintha found him a new little odd job or two. She set him to dance on the oak floors with a brush fastened to his right foot; and,

after a rehearsal or two, she made him wait at table. Did n't he bang the things about! and when he brought a lady a dish, and she did not instantly attend, he gave her elbow a poke to attract attention: then she squeaked; and he grinned at her double absurdity in minding a touch, and not minding the real business of the table.

His wrongs rankled in him. He vented antique phrases.

"I want a change, — this village is the last place the Almighty made," etc.

He was attacked with a moral disease, viz. he affected the company of soldiers. They had seen the world. He spent his weekly salary carousing with the military, a class of men so brilliant that they are not expected to pay for their share in the drink; they contribute the anecdotes and the familiar appeals to Heaven.

Present at many recitals, the heroes of which lost nothing by being their own historians, Dard imbibed a taste for military adventure. His very talk, which used to be so homely, began now to be tinselled with big swelling words of vanity imported from the army. I need hardly say these bombastical phrases did not elevate his general dialect: they lay distinct upon the surface, "like lumps of marl upon a barren soil, encumbering the ground they cannot fertilize."

Jacintha reminded him of an incident connected with warfare, — wounds.

"Do you remember how you were down upon your luck when you did but cut your foot? Why, that is nothing in the army. They never go out to fight but some come back with arms off, and some with legs off, and some with heads, and some don't come back at all, and how would you like that?"

This view of warfare at first cooled Dard's impatience for the field. But the fighting half of his heart received an ally in one Sergeant La Croix: not a bad name for a military aspirant. This sergeant was at the village on a short leave of absence, and was now only waiting to march the new recruits to Paris, to join the army of the Rhine. Sergeant La Croix was a man who could by the force of his eloquence make soldiering appear the most delightful as well as glorious of human pursuits. His tongue fired the inexperienced soul with a love of arms, as do the drums and trumpets and gallant ringing tread of soldiers marching under colors that blaze and bayonets that glitter in the sun. He would have been invaluable in England, where we recruit by jargon. He was superfluous in France, where they recruited by compulsion: but he was ornamental, and he set Dard and one or two more on fire. Sergeant La Croix had so keen a sense of military glory, that he did not deign to descend to that merely verbal honor civilians call veracity.

To speak plainly, the sergeant was a fluent, fertile, interesting, sonorous, ever-ready, and most audacious liar: and such was his success, that Dard and one or two more became mere human fiction pipes, irrigating a small rural district with false views of military life, derived from that inexhaustible spring. At last the long-threatened conscription was levied: every person fit to bear arms, and not coming under the allowed exceptions, had a number given him; and at a certain hour the numbers corresponding to these were deposited in an urn, and one third of them were drawn in presence of the authorities. Those men whose numbers were drawn had to go for soldiers. Jacintha awaited the result in great tremor. She could not sit at home. She left the chateau, and went down the road to meet Dard, who had promised to come and tell her the result as soon as known. At last she saw him approaching in a disconsolate way.

"O Dard, speak! are we undone? are you a dead man?" cried she.

"What d' ye mean?"

"Have they made a soldier of you?"

"No such luck: I shall die a man of all work."

"And you are sorry? you unnatural little monster! you have no feeling for me, then?"

"O yes! I have; but glory is No. 1 with me now, citizeness!"

"How loud the little bantams crow! You leave glory to six feet high, Dard."

"General Bonaparte is n't much higher than I am, and glory sits upon his brow. Why should n't glory sit upon my brow?"

"Because it would weigh you down, and smother you, you little fool."

"O, we know you girls don't care for reputation."

"Don't we, though?"

"But you care for the blunt."

"Agreed!"

"Well, then, soldiers are the boys that make it."

"La! Dard, I never heard that before."

"At the wars I mean: pillaging and cetera, not on three sous a day here at home of course. Why, Jacintha," said Dard, lowering his voice mysteriously, "there's scarce a soldier in the army that has n't got a thousand francs hid in his knapsack."

"La! now! But, then, what is the use of it if he is to be killed next minute?"

"I'll tell you. When the soldier is dead —"

"Yes, Dard."

"The general turns it into paper money, and sends it home to the Minister of War."

"Ay! like enough."

"*He* takes it, and puts as much *to* it out of the public chest: then he sends it all to the dead man's wife, or, if he has got no wife, to his sweetheart. Then with that she can marry the chap that she has been taking up with all the time the first was getting his brains knocked out. O, I am up to all the moves now!"

"But, Dard, you forget, I could n't bear you to be killed at any price."

"No more could I," was the frank reply; "but I should n't. The enemy always fire too high: that's through nervishness! We've licked 'em so often. Most of the bullets go over our army altogether into the trees round about the field of battle: the chaps that do get killed are your six-foot ones: their stupid heads are always in the way of everything, you know. My heart is quite down about it, girl. Here is my number, ninety-nine!"

"And it was not drawn Dard, you are sure?"

"No! I tell you that I saw them all drawn. I saw the last number in the gentleman's hand: it was sixty something. So I came to tell you, because — because —"

"Because you were as glad as I am. I don't think but what a bullet would kill a little one as well as a big one. You are well out of that, Dard. Come and help me draw the water."

"Well! since there is no immortal glory to be picked up to-day, I will go in for odd jobs again."

"That is you, Dard. That is what you are fittest for."

While they were drawing the water, a voice was heard hallooing. Dard looked up, and there was a rigid military figure, with a tremendous mustache, peering about. Dard was overjoyed.

"It is my friend! it is my boon companion! Come here, old fellow. Ain't I glad to see you! that is all?"

La Croix marched towards the pair.

"What are you skulking here for, recruit ninety-nine?" said he, sternly, dropping the boon companion in the sergeant: "the rest are on the road."

"The rest, old fellow? what do you mean? why, I was not drawn."

"Yes, you were."

"No, I was n't."

"Thunder of war, but I say you were. Yours was the last number."

"That is an unlucky guess of yours, for I saw the last number. Look here": and he fumbled in his pocket and produced his number.

La Croix instantly fished out a corresponding number.

"Well: and here you are: this was the last number drawn."

Dard burst out laughing.

"You goose," said he, "that is sixty-six, — look at it."

"Sixty-six," roared the sergeant, "no more than yours is, — they are both sixty-sixes when you play tricks with them, and turn them up like that: but they are both ninety-nines when you look at them fair."

Dard scratched his head.

"Come, no shirking: make up his bundle, girl, and let us be off, we have got our marching orders. We are going to the Rhine."

"And do you think I will let him go?" screamed Jacintha. "No! I will say one word to Madame Raynal, and she will buy him a substitute directly."

Dard stopped her fiercely.

"No! I have told all in the village that I would go the first chance: it is come, and I'll go. I won't stay to be laughed at about this too. If I was sure to be cut in pieces, I'd go! give over blubbering, my lass, and get us a bottle of the best wine, and while we are drinking it, the sergeant and I, you make up my bundle. I shall never do any good here."

Jacintha knew the obstinate toad. She did as she was bid, and soon the little bundle was ready, and the two men faced the wine: La Croix, radiant and bellicose, — Dard, crestfallen but dogged (for there was a little bit of good French stuff at the bottom of the creature), and Jacintha rocking herself, with her apron over her head.

La Croix. "I'll give you a toast. 'Here 's gunpowder.'"

Jacintha. "Oh! oh! oh! oh! oh!"

Dard (angrily). "Do drop that, Jacintha, — do you think that is encouraging? Sergeant, I told this poor girl all about glory before you came, but she was not ripe for it, — say something to cheer her up, for I can't."

"I can!" cried this trumpet of battle, emptying its glass. "Attention, young woman."

"O dear! O dear! yes, sir."

"A French soldier is a man who carries France in his heart."

"But if the cruel foreign soldiers kill him? oh!"

"If they do, he does not care a —. Every man must die: horses likewise and dogs, and donkeys when they come to the end of their troubles. But dogs and donkeys and chaps in blouses can't die gloriously as Dard may, if he has any luck at all: so from this hour, if there was twice as little of him, be proud of him, for from this time he is a part of France and her renown. Come, recruit ninety-nine, shoulder your traps at duty's call, and let us go off in form. Attention!! Quick, march! Ten thousand devils! is that the way I showed you to march? Did n't I tell you to start from the left leg? Now try again. Quick — march! left, right — left, right — left, right. Now you 've GOT it — DRAT ye — KEEP it, left, right — left, right — left, right. And the sergeant marched the little odd-jobber to the wars.

CHAPTER XXXV.

Josephine. "Laure, the doctor is cold to me."

Laure. "And to me too."

Josephine. "I have noticed it ever since we came from Frejus, Laure."

Laure. "Yes, and I have no patience with him: of course you know why it is?"

Josephine. "No! would to Heaven I did!"

Laure. "It is jealousy: these men are twice as jealous as we are, and about twice as many things. We had another doctor at Frejus."

Josephine. "But how could I help? No! It must be more than that. Oh! if he suspects!!!"

Laure. "No, dear! now don't tor-

ment yourself. I saw his face when he said, 'I decline to interfere with another doctor's patients!' 'Another doctor's patients too!' such a phrase!"

Josephine. "Pray Heaven you may be right! He is very cold to us, especially to me."

Laure (sharply). "Don't be fanciful, dear."

Josephine. "Forgive me. Let us speak of something else. What have you done to Edouard?"

Laure. "That is a question I have answered, let me see, twelve times."

Josephine. "Yes, Laure, but your answers were no answers at all, and I want the truth."

Laure. "He is a little ill-tempered, jealous, tyrannical wretch."

Josephine. "Who is he jealous of?"

Laure made a face, and began to count on her fingers. "First, of Camille Dujardin."

Josephine. "Oh!"

Laure. 'Secondly, of Josephine de Beaurepaire."

Josephine. "Ah!"

Laure. "Thirdly, of all the world."

Josephine. "I must hear his account, and make you friends again."

Laure opened her mouth to remonstrate, but Josephine implored her to let her have her own way.

"I have not many joys, Laure: this one we can all have, the pleasure of making peace between our friends that misunderstand one another."

"My poor sister!" cried Laure, "when will you think of yourself, and leave fools and egotists to mend their own breakages?"

"You consent to my interference, Laure?"

No answer.

Edouard, the moment his temper cooled, became very sad. He longed to be friends again with Laure, but he did not know how. His own pride held him back, and so did his fear that he had gone too far, and that his offended mistress would not listen to an offer of reconciliation from him.

What a change! He sat down alone now to all his little meals. No sweet mellow voices in his ear, after the fatigues of the day.

His landlady brought him in a letter in a lady's handwriting. His heart gave a leap. But, on examining it, he was disappointed. It was something like Laure's, but it was not hers. It proved to be three lines from Josephine, requesting him to come and speak to her. He went over directly. Josephine was in the Pleasance.

"What has she been doing to you, dear?" began she, kindly.

"Has not she told you, Madame Raynal?"

"No!"

"But she has told you what *I* said to *her?*" said Edouard, looking uneasy.

"No: she is refractory. She will tell me nothing; and that makes me fear she is the one in fault."

"O, if she does not accuse me, I am sure I will not accuse her. I dare say I am to blame: it is not her fault that I cannot make her love me."

"But you can: she does."

"Yes! but she loves others better, and she holds me out no hope it will ever be otherwise. You are an angel, Josephine; but on this one point how can I hope for your sympathy. Alas! you are my most terrible rival."

"I don't understand you."

"She told me plainly she never could love me as she loves you"

"And you believed her?"

"I saw no reason to disbelieve her."

"Foolish boy! Dear Edouard, you must not attach so much importance to every word we say. Does my sister at her age know everything? is she a prophet; Perhaps she really fancies she will always love her sister as she does now; but you are a man of sense: you ought to smile and let her talk. When you marry her you will take her to your own house. She will only see me now and then. She will have you and your affection always present. Each day some new

tie between you and her. You two will share every joy, every sorrow. Your children playing at your feet, and reflecting the features of both parents, will make you one: your hearts will melt together in that blessed union which raises earth so near to heaven; and then you will wonder you could ever be jealous of poor Josephine, who must never hope — ah! me!"

Edouard, wrapped up in himself, mistook Josephine's emotion at the picture she had drawn of conjugal love. He soothed her, vowed upon his honor he never would separate Laure from her.

"My dear sister," he cried: "you are an angel and I am a fiend. Jealousy must be the meanest of all sentiments. I never will be jealous again, — above all, jealous of you, sweet angel: after all, you are my sister, as well as hers, and she has a right to love you since I love you."

"You make me very happy when you talk so," sighed Josephine: "peace is made?"

"Never again to be broken. I will go and ask her pardon. What is the matter now?"

Jacintha was cackling very loud, and dismissing with ignominy two beggars, male and female.

Jacintha was industry personified, and had no sympathy with mendicity. In vain the couple protested, Heaven knows with what truth, that they were not beggars, but mechanics out of work. "March! tramp!" was Jacintha's least word. She added, giving the rein to her imagination, "I'll loose the dog." The man moved away, the woman turned appealingly to Edouard. He and Josephine came towards the group. She had got a sort of large hood, and in that hood she carried an infant on her shoulders. Josephine inspected this arrangement.

"It looks sickly, poor little thing."

"What can you expect, my young lady? its mother had to rise and go about when she ought to have been in her bed: and now she has not enough to give it."

"O dear!" cried Josephine. "Jacintha," she cried, "give them some good food, and a nice bottle of wine."

"That I will," cried Jacintha, changing her tone, with courtier-like alacrity. "I did not see she was nursing."

Josephine put a franc into the infant's hand: the little fingers closed on it with that instinct of appropriation, which is our first, and often our last sentiment. Josephine smiled lovingly on the child, and the child seeing that gave a small crow.

"Bless it," said Josephine, and thereupon her lovely head reared itself like a crested snake's, and then darted down on the child: and the young noble kissed the beggar's brat as if she would eat it.

This won the mother's heart more than even the gifts.

"Blessings on you, my lady," she cried. "I pray the Lord not to forget this when a woman's trouble comes on you in your turn! It is a small child, mademoiselle, but it is not an unhealthy one. See. Inspection was offered and eagerly accepted.

Edouard stood looking on at some distance in amazement, mingled with disgust.

"Ugh!" said he, when she rejoined him, "how could you kiss that nasty little brat?"

"Dear Edouard, don't speak so of a poor little innocent. Who would pity them if we women did not? It had lovely eyes."

"Like saucers!"

"Yes."

"It is no compliment when you are affectionate to anybody: you overflow with benevolence on all creation; like the rose which sheds its perfume on the first comer."

"If he is not going to be jealous of me next!" whined Josephine.

She took him to Laure, and she said: "There, whenever good friends quarrel, it is understood they were both in the wrong. By-gones

are to be by-gones, and, when your time comes round to quarrel again, please consult me first, since it is me you will afflict."

She left them together and went and tapped timidly at the doctor's study.

Monsieur St. Aubin received her with none of that coldness she had seen in him. He appeared both surprised and pleased at her visit to his little sanctum. He even showed an emotion Josephine was at a loss to account for. But that wore off during the conversation.

"Dear friend," said she, "I come to consult you about Laure and Edouard."

She then told him what had happened, and hinted at Edouard's one fault.

The doctor smiled.

"It is curious," said he. "You have come to draw my attention to a point on which it has been fixed for some days past. I am preparing a cure for the two young fools: a severe remedy, but in their case a sure one."

He then showed her a deed, wherein he had settled sixty thousand francs on Laure and her children.

"Edouard has a good place. He is active and rising, and with my sixty thousand francs, and a little purse of ten thousand more for furniture and nonsense, they can marry next week if they like. Yes, marriage is a medicine which acts differently on good men and good women. She does not love him quite enough. Cure — marriage. He loves her a little too much. Cure — marriage!"

"O doctor!"

"Can't help it. I did not make men and women. We must take human nature as we find it, and thank God for it on the whole. Have you nothing else to confide to me, my dear?"

"No, doctor."

"Are you sure, my child?"

"No, dear friend."

"Then there is only this thing in which I can co-operate with you?"

"But this is very near my heart," faltered Josephine.

The doctor sighed. He then said gently: —

"They shall be happy: as happy as you wish them."

Meantime, in another room, a reconciliation scene was taking place, and the mutual concessions of two impetuous, but generous spirits.

The doctor's generosity transpired in the house, and the wedding became an understood thing. All Laure asked for was to see more color in Josephine's cheek.

"I could not leave her as she is, and I will not."

"Why leave her at all?" said Edouard; "we will have her and nurse her till my dear commandant comes back to her."

The baroness's sight had failed considerably for some months past. But the change in Josephine's appearance was too marked to escape her.

She often asked Laure what could be the matter.

"Some passing ailment."

"Passing? She has been so, on and off, a long time."

"The doctor is sure she will outgrow it."

"Pray Heaven she may. She makes me very anxious."

Laure made light of it to her mother, but in her own heart she grew more and more anxious day by day. She held secret conferences with Jacintha; that sagacious personage had a plan to wake Josephine from her deathly languor, and even soothe her nerves, and check those pitiable fits of nervous irritation to which she had become subject. Unfortunately Jacintha's plan was so difficult and so dangerous that at first even the courageous Laure recoiled from it; but there are dangers that seem to diminish when you look them long in the face.

The whole party was seated in the

tapestried room: Jacintha was there, sewing a pair of sheets, at a respectful distance from the gentlefolks, absorbed in her work; but with both ears on full cock.

The doctor, holding his glasses to his eye, had just begun to read out the *Moniteur*.

The baroness sat close to him; Edouard, opposite; and the young ladies, each in her corner of a large luxurious sofa, at some little distance.

"'The Austrians left seventy cannon, eight thousand men, and three colors upon the field.' Aha!

"'Army of the North. General Menard defeated the enemy after a severe engagement, taking thirteen field-pieces and a quantity of ammunition.' The military news ought to be printed larger instead of smaller than the rest."

The baroness. "And there is never anything in the *Moniteur*."

St. Aubin. "The deuce there is not."

Baroness. "It is always the same thing: it is only the figures that vary. So many cannon taken, so many fortresses, and so many colors. There is never anything about Egypt, the only thing that interests people."

St. Aubin. "'Army of the Rhine.' If I was king, I would put down small type; it is the greatest foe knowledge has. 'A sanguinary engagement, — eight thousand of the enemy killed and wounded. We have some losses to lament. The Colonel Dujardin — '"

Josephine. "Ah!"

Baroness. "Only wounded, I hope!"

St. Aubin. "'At the head of the 22d Brigade, made a brilliant charge on the enemy's flank, that is described in the general order as having decided the fate of the battle.' Bravo, well done, Camille!"

Baroness. "How badly you do read, monsieur. I thought he was gone; instead of that he has covered himself with glory; but it is all our doing, is it not, young ladies? We saved his life."

St. Aubin. "We saved it amongst us, madame."

Edouard. "What is the matter, Laure?"

Laure. "Nothing: give me the salts, quick."

She only passed them, as it were, under her own nostrils; then held them to Josephine, who was now observed to be trembling all over. Laure contrived to make it appear that this was mere sympathy on Josephine's part.

"Don't be silly, girls," cried the baroness, cheerfully; "there is nobody killed that we care about."

Jacintha. "If you please, monsieur, is there anything about Dard?"

St. Aubin. "There won't be anything about him, till he is knocked on the head.

Jacintha. "Then I don't want to hear anything about him at all."

At this very moment, the new servant, Fanchette, whom the baroness had hired, to Jacintha's infinite disgust, brought in the long-expected letter from Egypt.

Baroness. "Here is something better than salts for you. It is a long letter, Josephine, and all in his own hand. So he is safe, thank Heaven! I was beginning to be uneasy again. You frightened me for that poor Camille; but this is worth a dozen Camilles. This is my son: I would give my old life for him.

"'My dear mother,' (bless him!) 'my dear wife, and my dear sister,' (well, you sit there like two rocks!!) — 'We have just gained a battle, — fifty colors.' (What do you think of that?) 'All the enemy's baggage and ammunition are in our hands.' (This is something like a battle, this one.) 'Also the Pacha of Natolie.' (Ah! the Pacha of Natolie, — an important personage, no doubt, though I never had the honor of hearing of him. Do you hear? — you on the sofa. My son has captured the Pacha of Natolie. He is as brave as Cæsar.) 'But this success is not one of those that lead to important results,' (never mind, a victory is a vic-

tory!) 'and I think we shall be a long time in this confounded country.' "

Here a glance quick as lightning passed between Josephine and Laure.

"'Have you news of your patient, my old companion in arms, Dujardin? I spoke of him to Bonaparte the other day. A thorough soldier, that fellow.' (So he is: and a charming young man.) "Come here, Josephine." She read to Josephine in a somewhat lower tone of voice: "'Tell my wife I love her more and more every day. I don't expect as much from her, but she will make me very happy if she can make shift to like me as well as her family do.' No danger! What husband deserves to be loved as he does? I long for his return, that his wife, his mother, and his sister may all combine to teach this poor soldier what happiness means. We owe him everything, Josephine, and if we did not love him, and make him happy, we should be monsters; now should we not?"

Josephine "Yes."

"*Now* you may all of you read his letter. Jacintha and all," said the baroness, graciously.

The letter circulated. Meantime the baroness conversed with St. Aubin in quite an undertone.

"My friend, look at that child!"

"What child?"

"Josephine. See how pale she is. I noticed it the moment she came near me."

"Her nerves are weak, and I frightened her."

"No! no! it is more than that. She has lost her appetite. She never laughs. She sighs. That girl is ill, or else she is going to be ill."

"Neither the one nor the other, madame," said St. Aubin, looking her coolly in the face.

"But I say she is. Is a doctor's eye keener than a mother's?"

"Considerably," replied the doctor, with cool and enviable effrontery.

The baroness rose.

"Now, children, for our evening walk. We shall enjoy it now."

"I trust you may: but for all that I must forbid the evening air to one of the party, — to Madame Raynal."

The baroness came to him and whispered: —

"That is right. Thank you. See what is the matter with her, and tell me." And she carried off the rest of the party.

At the same time Jacintha asked permission to pass the rest of the evening with her relations in the village.

But why that swift, quivering glance of intelligence between Jacintha and Laure de Beaurepaire when the baroness said: "Yes, certainly."

Josephine and the doctor were left alone.

Josephine had noticed the old people whisper and her mother glance her way, and the whole woman was on her guard. She assumed a languid complaceney, and, by way of shield, if necessary, took some work, and bent her eyes and apparently her attention on it.

The doctor was silent and ill at ease.

She saw he had something weighty on his mind, and that it would come out, unless she could divert it. A vague fear prompted her to avoid all weighty topics. So she said quietly: —

"The air would have done me no harm."

"Neither will a few words with me."

"O no! dear friend. I think I should have liked a little walk this evening."

"I played the tyrant. A friend is sometimes a tyrant!"

"I forgive you. My walk is not lost, since I gain a *tête-à-tête* with you in exchange for it."

The doctor took no notice of this somewhat hollow speech. There was another silence. A very long one.

"Josephine," said the doctor, quietly, "when you were a child I saved your life."

"I have often heard my mother

speak of it. I was choked by the croup, and you had the courage to lance my windpipe."

"Had I?" said the doctor, with a smile. He added, gravely, "It seems then that to be cruel is sometimes kindness. Josephine, we love those whose life we have saved."

"And they love you."

"Since that day, Josephine, how many kind offices, how sweet and sacred an affection, between us two. Many a father and daughter might have taken a lesson from us."

"From you, my second father, — not from me."

"Yet I have to reproach you or myself. For after all these years I have failed to inspire you with confidence." The doctor's voice was sad, and Josephine's bosom panted.

"Pray do not say so," she cried. "I would trust you with my life."

"But not, it seems, with your secret."

"My secret? What secret? I have no secrets."

"Josephine, you have now for full twelve months suffered in body and mind; yet you have never come to me for counsel, for comfort, for an old man's experience and advice, or even for medical aid."

"But, dear friend, I assure you —"

"We *do not* deceive our friend. We *cannot* deceive our doctor."

Josephine trembled, but women are not to be drawn as men are. She fought every inch of ground after the manner of her sex. "Dear doctor," said she, "I love you all the better for this. Your regard for me has for once blinded your science. I am not so robust as you have known me, but there is nothing serious the matter with me. Let us talk of something else. Besides, it is not interesting to talk about one's self."

"Very well, since there is nothing serious or interesting in your case, we will talk about something that is both serious and interesting."

"With all my heart": and she smiled content at averting criticism from herself.

"We will talk about YOUR CHILD!"

The work dropped from Josephine's hands; she turned her face wildly on St. Aubin, and with terrified eyes fixed on him, faltered out: —

"M—my child?"

"My words are plain," replied he, gravely. "YOUR CHILD!"

CHAPTER XXXVI.

Rien n'est certain que l'imprévu.

"Our success leads to no great results, and I fear we shall be a long time in this confounded country." So wrote Raynal.

Forty-eight hours after he was sailing Franceward with General Bonaparte. That great man dropped Egypt suddenly, very suddenly to those who confound the date of an act with the date of the secret determination that has preceded it who knows how long? He dropped Egypt, not, as his small critics fancy, because France and he could not have contrived to hold a corner of Egypt to this day, but because he had discovered he could not make of little Egypt the great stepping-stone he had intended.

Take this clew to Napoleon I.

The ends of ordinary geniuses were his means.

Their goals his stepping-stones.

Goes he to Egypt, be sure he goes for Syria and Assyria, at least.

If Moscow — little city of huts — thinks he went to Moscow for Moscow, it pays itself too great a compliment, and him too small a one. He went to Moscow for Delhi and Canton.

And when I think of this trait in him, with all its mental consequences, I come by my art, with regret, to the conclusion, that Napoleon I. was at no period of his career a happy man, nor, with his gigantic estimate of success, what he would call a very suc-

cessful man; nor much gratified by the successes that dazzled all the rest of the world.

In the magnitude of his views Napoleon will stand alone among the sons of earth till the last trumpet. But one trait he shared with every successful genius, whether of the sword, the pen, or the brush. Unsuccessful geniuses waste themselves. Successful geniuses lay themselves out to advantage: ay, economize themselves, — some by calculation, the rest by instinct. Napoleon was too practical to waste Napoleon long on Egypt. He did not give up the little country of the great pyramids in despair: he flung it up by calculation. The globe offered greater prizes, — and the globe was his province.

He came swiftly back to Paris, and Raynal, who was on his staff, came with him, but not to stay. He was to go off, without a day's delay, to the Rhine with despatches and a command as brigadier in that army.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

"Your child!"

When the doctor repeated these words, when Josephine, looking in his face, saw he spoke from knowledge, however acquired, and not from guess, she glided down slowly off the sofa, and clasped his knees as he stood before her, and hid her face in an agony of shame and terror on his knees. In this attitude they were surprised by Laure, who had slipped back (on a pretence of forgetting her gloves) to see what St. Aubin had to say to Josephine.

Laure opened the door softly. She did not arrive soon enough to hear the terrible words; but she saw her sister trembling at the doctor's knees, and she herself stood white and panting. "What could it mean?"

"Forgive me!" cried Josephine, in a choking voice, — "forgive me! O, pray do not expose me! Do not destroy me!"

Laure lowered her head and darted behind a large screen that stood in the room, unseen either by the doctor, whose back was turned to her, or by her sister, who was hiding her eyes against the doctor's knees.

The doctor raised Madame Raynal against her will. She was so ashamed she could not bear him to see her face. But he made her sit, and held one of her hands, and soothed her terror, while she turned from him and hid her face on her hand, and her hand on a corner of the couch.

"Shall I ever expose or wound you, foolish one? This is to keep you from exposing and destroying yourself. Unhappy child, did you think you had deceived me, or that you are fit to deceive any but the blind? Your face, your anguish after Colonel Dujardin's departure, — your languor, and then your sudden robustness, your appetite, your caprices, your strange sojourn at Frejus, your changed looks, and loss of health on your return? Josephine, your old friend has passed many an hour thinking of you, divining your folly, following your trouble step by step, not invited to aid you, incapable of betraying you."

As he concluded these words, Laure came running towards him with tearful eyes, and flung both her arms round his neck.

"Ah, my poor child!" said he; "this is not a secret for one of your age to know!"

"Josephine did not tell me," was the prompt answer.

"Strange that nobody should think *me* a proper person to be trusted!" said the doctor.

"Dear doctor! if I had respected you less, I could have borne to confess to you."

"No, no! you feared me. You had no cause. You did not trust me. You had every reason to. I will show you I was not quite unworthy of the confidence you denied me.

First, I was worthy of it, because I never lost my confidence in you, Josephine. Here were all the signs of an illicit attachment. Well, what did I say? I said, I know my Josephine. I went to the *mairie* at Frejus upon a very different pretence. I got a sight of the books, and in a minute I found Camille's name and yours. Such was my confidence in you, who had none in me. I said there must have been a marriage of some sort."

The doctor looked round, triumphant in his own sagacity. Alas! he missed the merited applause. Josephine looked in his face, puzzled.

"Dear friend," said she, hesitating, "I do not quite understand you. I know your sagacity, but since you had discovered I was a — a — mother, of course you know I must be a wife. How could I be a mother, you know, unless I was a wife first?"

The doctor wore a look half satirical, half tender: he took a pinch of snuff. "That is very true," said he, mighty dryly. "Well, I revoke my claim to intelligence on that score. Let us try again. Mivart sent you some soothing draughts after my visit to Frejus, — magical ones, eh? I prescribed them."

"Is it possible? dearest, best of friends, — ah! I have been very culpable towards you."

"Try again: a fortnight ago, I was absent two days."

"Yes! and you never told us where you had been."

"I was at Frejus: that virulent disease the small-pox was there."

"O Heaven!" and Josephine clasped her hands in terror.

"The danger is past. I heard of it. Instantly I got some vaccine from Paris, and I went over to Frejus, for I said to myself — "

The doctor never said it to anybody but himself: for ere he concluded his sentence he was almost stifled with embraces and kisses by the young mother. In the midst of which she ended his sentence for him.

"You said: 'I saved Josephine's life, I will save her boy.'"

"We are beginning to understand one another," said the doctor, with a strong tendency to whimper, for which he took a pinch of snuff as antidote. Now, dears, I will tell you what I have divined, and you shall tell me the rest, and then we will act in concert. The news came of Raynal's death. You thought yourself free, that I understand. But why marry so soon, and why not marry openly?"

Said Laure, hastily: —

"It was all his fault."

"Whose?"

"No! no!" said Josephine. "It was not his fault, — ah! do not throw the blame on the absent and the unhappy."

"I am not going to blame him *much*. He was a man, and required what I believe all *young* men do, — that she should sacrifice every feeling to him. He said, if you love me you will marry me before the priest, and erase from our minds that other marriage. She refused."

"Say, rather, I hesitated."

"Well! she declined: then he reproached her!"

"Never! doctor, dear doctor, Camille never reproached me: he only pined away and doubted my love. My resolution failed: I wanted to make everybody happy: I volunteered to marry him secretly, not to give my mother pain."

"She volunteered!" cried Laure, impatiently. "It was I who forced that fatal measure on her: I alone am to blame: it is she alone who suffers."

"O concealment! — concealment!" cried the doctor. "But you are punished more than you deserve. I understand it all too well! your story is but the story of your sex, — self-sacrifice. I dare say you sacrificed your heart to your mother in marrying Colonel Raynal."

"She did! — she did!"

"Then you sacrificed every feeling but pity to your lover. And now

you will sacrifice everything to your husband."

"He is well worthy of any sacrifice I can make," said Josephine; "but, O sir, if you knew how hard it is to me to live!"

"I hope to make it less hard to you erelong," said the doctor, quietly. He then congratulated himself on having forced Josephine to confide in him. "For," said he, "you never needed an experienced friend more than at this moment. Your mother will not always be so blind as of late. Edouard is suspicious. Jacintha is a shrewd young woman, and very inquisitive."

Here the young ladies interchanged a look, but were ashamed to own they had taken Jacintha into their confidence.

"I do not dwell much on the terrible event of Raynal's immediate return: to-day's letter renders that improbable. But improbable is not impossible; and where all is possible, and all is danger, the severest caution is necessary: first, then, what are your own plans?"

"*I* don't know," said Josephine, helplessly.

"You — don't — know!" cried the doctor, looking at her in utter amazement.

"It is the answer of a madwoman, is it not? Doctor, I am little better. My foot has slipped on the edge of a precipice. I close my eyes, and let myself glide down it. What will become of me?"

"All shall be well if you do not still love that man."

"I shall love him to my last breath. How can I help loving him? He had loved me four years. I was his betrothed. I wronged him in my thoughts. War, prison, anguish, could not kill him; he loved me so. He struggled bleeding to my feet: and could I let him die, after all? Could I be crueller than prison and torture and despair?"

The doctor sighed deeply; but, arming himself with the necessary resolution, he said sternly: —

"Josephine, a woman of your name cannot vacillate between love and honor; such vacillations have but one end. I will not let you drift a moral wreck between passion and virtue; and that will be your lot if you hesitate now."

"Hesitate! Who dares to say I have hesitated where my honor is concerned? You can read our bodies then, but not our hearts. What! you see me so pale, forlorn, and dead, and that does not tell you I have bid Camille farewell forever?"

"Is it possible? Give me your hand, — it was well and wisely and nobly done. And, who knows? kindly too, perhaps."

Josephine continued: —

"That we might be safer still, I have not even told him he is a father: was woman ever so cruel as I am? I have written him but one letter; and in that I must deceive him. I told him I thought I might one day be happy, if I could hear that he did not give way to despair; I told him we must never meet again in this world. So now dispose of me. Show me my duty, and I will do it. This falsehood wrings my heart; shall I tell my husband the truth?"

"O no! no!" cried Laure, "do not let her. Colonel Raynal would kill her."

"If I thought that, nothing should stop me from telling him."

The doctor objected.

"What, tell him, while he is in Egypt? while his return alive is uncertain? needless cruelty!"

"And then my mother!" sighed Josephine, "my poor mother! She would hear it, and it would break her heart! I should wound her to death: and I love her so. I always loved her: but not as I do since — Now that I know what she has suffered for me, my very heart yearns at sight of her dear face. I must lose her one day, I know: but if my misconduct were to hasten that day — oh! it is too horrible. This is my hope: that poor Raynal will be long absent, and

that, ere he returns, mamma will lie safe from sorrow and shame in the little chapel. Doctor, when a woman of my age forms such wishes as these, I think you might pity her, and forgive her ill treatment of you, for she cannot be very happy. Ah me! ah me! ah me!"

"Courage! poor soul! All is now in my hands: and I will save you," said the doctor, his voice trembling in spite of him. "Sin lies in the intention. A more innocent woman than you does not breathe. Two courses lay open to you, — to leave this house with Camille Dujardin, or to dismiss him, and live for your hard duty till it shall please Heaven to make that duty easy (no middle course was tenable for a day); of these two paths you chose the right one, and, having chosen, you are not called on to reveal your misfortune, and make those unhappy to whose happiness you have sacrificed your own for years to come."

"Forever!" said Josephine, quietly.

St. Aubin. "The young use that word lightly. The old have almost ceased to use it. They have seen how few earthly things can conquer time."

He resumed: —

"You think only of others, Josephine, but I shall think of you as well. I shall not allow your life to be wasted in a needless struggle against nature."

Laure looked puzzled: so the doctor explained. Her griefs were as many, before her child was born, yet her health stood firm. Why? because nature was on her side. Now she is sinking into the grave. Why? because she is defying nature. Nature intended her to be pressing her child to her bosom day and night: instead of that, a peasant woman at Frejus nurses the child, and the mother pines at Beaurepaire.

Through all this, Josephine leaned her face on her hands and her hands on the doctor's shoulder. In this attitude she murmured to him: —

"I have only *seen* him once since I came from Frejus."

"Poor thing!"

"Since you permit it I will go there to-morrow."

"You will do nothing of the kind. A second journey thither, when the first has awakened Edouard's suspicions? I forbid it."

Josephine was seized with one of her fits of irritation.

"Take care," cried she, pecking round at the doctor like an irritated pigeon, "don't be too cruel to me. You see I am obedient, resigned. I have given up all I lived for: but if I am never to have my boy's little arms round me to console me, there — why torment me any longer? Why not say to me, 'Josephine, you have offended Heaven: pray for pardon and die'?"

"I mean you to spend, not hours, but months, beside your child," said the doctor.

"Oh!"

"Through him I mean to save your life, so precious to us all. That little helpless soul is your guardian angel, he is for some time to come your one fount of hope and consolation. But it is not at Frejus you shall meet, not in a chattering village within a ride of Edouard, but in that great city where nobody knows or cares what goes on next door."

"In Paris!" cried Laure.

"Certainly: I shall go there to-morrow, the first thing. I shall take a house where I can receive you both; and outside the barrier, where the air is purest, Madame Jouvenel and her nursling shall live on the fat of the land, and you shall spend the days with them. After all, my nephew was not such a fool as they say. He divined what good uses some of his money would be put to by his ancestor."

Josephine's delight and gratitude were somewhat dashed when the doctor told her all this would take three weeks, and that he would not go to Paris unless she now promised him

on her honor not to go to Frejus in his absence.

She hesitated.

"Promise, dear," said Laure, with an intonation so fine that it attracted Josephine's notice, but not the doctor's. It was followed by a glance equally subtle.

"I promise," said Josephine, with her eye fixed inquiringly on her sister.

For once she could not make the telegraph out; but she could see it was playing, and that was enough. She did what Laure bid her.

"I promise. Ah! — Forgive me."

"Forgive you? what for?"

"I sighed. It was ungrateful."

"I forgive you, black-hearted creature," said the doctor, "but only upon conditions. You must keep your word about Frejus, and you must also promise me not to go kissing every child you see. Edouard tells me he saw you kissing a beggar's brat. The young rogue was going to quiz you about it at the dinner-table: luckily, he told me his intention, and I would not let him. I said the baroness would be annoyed with you for descending from your dignity, — and exposing a noble family to fleas, — hush! here he is."

"Tiresome!" muttered Laure, just when Edouard came forward, with a half-vexed face.

However, he turned it off in play.

"Won't the doctor give you your gloves?"

"Scold him rather for interesting me so: for it is he who has detained me."

"What have you been saying to her, monsieur, to interest her so? Give me a leaf out of your book. I need it."

The doctor was taken aback for a moment, but at last he said, slyly: —

"I told her nothing that will not interest her as much from your lips. I have been proposing to her to name the day. She says she must consult you before she decides that."

"O you wicked doctor! — and consult *him*, of all people!"

St. Aubin. "So be off, both of you, and don't reappear till it is settled."

Edouard. "Come, mademoiselle, you and I are *de trop* here."

Edouard's eyes sparkled. Laure went out with a face as red as fire.

It was a balmy evening. Edouard was to leave them for a week the next day. They were alone: Laure was determined he should go away quite happy. Everything was in Edouard's favor: he pleaded his cause warmly: she listened tenderly: this happy evening her piquancy and archness seemed to dissolve with tenderness as she and Edouard walked hand in hand under the moon: a tenderness all the more heavenly to her devoted lover, that she was not one of those angels that cloy a man by invariable sweetness.

For a little while she forgot everything but her companion. In that soft hour he won her to name the day.

"Josephine goes to Paris with the doctor in about three weeks," murmured she.

"And you will stay behind, all alone?"

"Alone? that shall depend on you, monsieur!"

On this Edouard caught her for the first time in his arms.

She made but a faint resistance.

"Seal me that promise, sweet one!"

"No! no! — there!"

He pressed a delicious first kiss upon two velvet lips, that in their innocence scarcely shunned the sweet attack.

For all that, the bond was no sooner sealed after this fashion, than the lady's cheek began to burn.

She had been taken by surprise.

"Suppose we go in *now?*" said she, dryly.

"Ah! not yet."

"It is late, dear Edouard."

And with these words something

returned to her mind with its full force, — something that Edouard had actually made her forget for more than an hour. How should she get rid of him now without hurting his feelings ?

" Edouard," said she, " can you get up early in the morning ? If you can, meet me here to-morrow before any of them are up : then we can talk without interruption."

Edouard was delighted.

" Eight o'clock ? "

" Sooner if you like. Mamma bade me come and read to her in her room to-night. She will be waiting for me. Is it not tiresome ? "

" Yes, it is."

" Well, we must not mind, dear ; in three weeks' time we are to have too much of one another, you know, instead of too little."

" Too much ! I shall never have enough of you. I shall hate the night which will rob me of the sight of you for so many hours in the twenty-four."

" If you can't see me, perhaps you may hear me : my tongue runs by night as well as by day."

" Well ! that is a comfort," said Edouard, gravely. " Yes, little quizzer, I would rather hear you scold than an angel sing. Judge, then, what music it is when you say you love me ! "

" I love you, Edouard."

Edouard kissed her hand warmly, and then looked at her face.

" No ! no ! " said she, laughing and blushing. " Don't be rude. Next time we meet."

" That is a bargain. But I won't go till you say you love me again."

" Edouard, don't be silly. I am ashamed of saying the same thing so often, — I won't say it any more. What is the use ? You know I love you. There, I *have* said it : how stupid ! "

" Adieu, then, my wife that is to be."

" Adieu ! dear Edouard."

" My hus— Go on, — my hus—"

" Band that shall be."

Then they walked very slowly towards the house, and once more Laure left quizzing, and was all tenderness.

" Will you not come in, and bid them 'good night' ? "

" No, my own. I am in heaven. Common faces, common voices, would bring me down to earth. Let me be alone ! — your sweet words ringing in my ear. I will dilute you with nothing meaner than the stars. See how bright they shine in heaven : but not so bright as you shine in my heart."

" Dear Edouard, you flatter me, you spoil me. Alas ! why am I not more worthy your love ? "

" More worthy ! How can that be ? "

Laure sighed.

" But I will atone for all. I will make you a better — (here she substituted a full stop for a substantive) — than you expect. You will see else."

She lingered at the door ; a proof that if Edouard, at that particular moment, had seized another kiss, there would have been no very violent opposition or offence.

But he was not so impudent as some. He had been told to wait till next meeting for that. He prayed Heaven to bless her, and so the affianced lovers parted for the night.

It was about nine o'clock. Edouard, instead of returning to his lodgings, started down towards the town, to conclude a bargain with the innkeeper for an English mare he was in treaty for. He wanted her for to-morrow's work ; so that decided him to make the purchase. In purchases, as in other matters, a feather turns the balanced scale. He sauntered leisurely down. It was a very clear night : the full moon and the stars shining silvery and vivid. Edouard's heart swelled with joy. He was loved, after all, deeply loved ; and in three short weeks he was actually to be Laure's husband : her lord and master. How

like a heavenly dream it all seemed, — the first hopeless courtship, and now the wedding fixed! But it was no dream: he felt her soft words still murmur music at his heart, and the shadow of her velvet lips slept upon his own.

He had strolled about a league when he heard the ring of a horse's hoofs coming towards him, accompanied by a clanking noise: it came nearer and nearer, till it reached a hill that lay a little ahead of Edouard: then the sounds ceased: the cavalier was walking his horse up the hill.

Presently, as if they had started from the earth, up popped between Edouard and the sky first a cocked hat that seemed, in that light, to be cut with a razor out of flint, then the wearer, phosphorescent here and there; so brightly the keen moonlight played on his epaulets and steel scabbard.

A step or two nearer, and Edouard gave a great shout; it was Colonel Raynal.

After the first warm greeting, and questions and answers, Raynal told him he was on his way to the Rhine with despatches.

"To the Rhine?"

Raynal laughed.

"I am allowed six days to get there. I made a calculation, and found I could give Beaurepaire half a day. I shall have to make up for it by hard riding. You know me. Always in a hurry. It is Bonaparte's fault this time. He is another that is always in a hurry."

"Why, colonel," said Edouard, "let us make haste then. Mind they go early to rest at the chateau."

"But you are not coming my way, youngster?"

"Not coming your way? Yes, but I am. Yours is a face I don't see every day, colonel; besides, I would not miss *their* faces, especially the baroness's and Madame Raynal's, at sight of you: and, besides" — and the young gentleman chuckled to himself, and thought — "the next time we meet: well, this will be the next time. May I jump up behind?"

Colonel Raynal nodded assent; Edouard took a run, and lighted like a monkey on the horse's crupper. He pranced and kicked at this unexpected addition; but, the spur being promptly applied to his flanks, he bounded off with a snort that betrayed more astonishment than satisfaction, and away they cantered to Beaurepaire without drawing rein.

"There," said Edouard, "I was afraid they would be gone to bed; and they are. The very house seems asleep — fancy — at half past ten."

"That is a pity," said Raynal, "for this chateau is the stronghold of etiquette. They will be two hours dressing before they can come out and shake hands. I must put my horse into the stable. Go you and give the alarm."

"I will, colonel. Stop, first let me see whether none of them are up, after all."

And Edouard walked round the chateau, and soon discovered a light at one window, — the window of the tapestried room. Running round the other way he came slap upon another light: this one was nearer the ground. A narrow but massive door, which he had always seen, not only locked, but screwed up, was wide open; and through the aperture the light of a candle streamed out, and met the moonlight streaming in.

"Hallo!" cried Edouard.

He stopped, turned, and looked in.

"Hallo!" he cried again, much louder.

A young woman was sleeping with her feet in the silvery moonlight, and her head in the orange-colored blaze of a flat candle, which rested on the next step above of a fine stone staircase, whose existence was now first revealed to the inquisitive Edouard.

Coming plump upon all this so unexpectedly, he quite started.

"Why, Jacintha!"

He touched her on the shoulder to

wake her. No. Jacintha was sleeping as only tired domestics can sleep. He might have taken the candle and burnt her gown off her back. She had found a step that fitted into the small of her back, and another that supported her head, and there she was fast as the door.

At this moment Raynal's voice was heard: —

"Are you there?"

Edouard went to him.

"There is a light in that bedroom."

"It is not a bedroom, colonel: it is our sitting-room now. We shall find them all there, or at least the young ladies, and perhaps the doctor. The baroness goes to bed early. Meantime I can show you one of our *dramatis personæ*, and an important one too. She rules the roast."

He took him mysteriously and showed him Jacintha.

"Hallo!" cried Raynal. "She can't have much on her conscience."

Moonlight by itself seems white, and candlelight by itself seems yellow; but when the two come into close contrast at night, candle turns a bloody flame, and moonlight a bluish gleam.

So Jacintha, with her shoes in this celestial sheen, and her face in that demoniacal glare, was enough to knock the gazer's eye out.

"Make a good sentinel, — this one," said Raynal, — "an outlying picket for instance, on rough ground, in front of the enemy's riflemen."

"Ha! ha! colonel. Let us see where this staircase leads. I have an idea it will prove a short cut."

"Where to?"

"To the saloon, or somewhere, or else to some of Jacintha's haunts. Serve her right for going to sleep at the mouth of her den."

"Forward then, — no, halt! Suppose it leads to the bedrooms! mind this, a thundering place for ceremony. We shall get drummed out of the barracks if we don't mind our etiquette."

While they hesitated, a soft, delicious harmony of female voices suddenly rose, and seemed to come and run round the walls. The men looked at one another in astonishment: for the effect was magical. The staircases being enclosed on all sides with stone walls and floored with stone, they were like flies inside a violoncello; the voices rang above, below, and on every side of the vibrating walls. In some epochs spirits as hardy as Raynal's, and wits as quick as Riviere's, would have fled then and there to the nearest public, and told over cups how they had heard the dames of Beaurepaire long since dead holding their revel, and the conscious old devil's nest of a chateau quivering to the ghostly strains.

But this was an incredulous age. They listened, and listened, and decided the sound came from up stairs.

"Let us mount, and surprise these singing witches," said Edouard.

"Surprise them: what for? It is not the enemy, — for once. What is the good of surprising our friends?" Storming parties and surprises were no novelty and therefore no treat to Raynal.

"It will be so delightful to see their faces at first sight of you. O colonel, for my sake! Don't spoil it all by going tamely in at the front door, after coming at night from Egypt for half an hour."

"Half a day. It is a childish trick! Well, show a light, or we shall surprise ourselves with a broken neck, going over ground we don't know to surprise the natives, — our skirmishers got nicked that way now and then in Egypt."

"Yes, colonel, I will go first with Jacintha's candle."

Edouard mounted the stairs on tiptoe. Raynal followed. The solid stone steps did not prate. The men had mounted a considerable way when puff a blast of wind came through a hole, and out went Edouard's candle. He turned sharply round to Raynal. "*Peste!*" said he, in a vicious whis-

per. But the other laid his hand on his shoulder and whispered, "Look to the front." He looked, and, his own candle being out, saw a glimmer on ahead. He crept towards it. It was a taper shooting a feeble light across a small aperture. They caught a glimpse of what seemed to be a small apartment. Yet Edouard recognized the carpet of the tapestried room, which was a very large room. Creeping a yard nearer, he discovered that it was the tapestried room, and that what had seemed the further wall was only the screen, behind which were lights, and Josephine and Laure singing a duet.

He whispered to Raynal: "It is the tapestried room."

"Is it a sttting-room?" whispered Raynal.

"Yes! yes! Mind and not knock your foot against the wood."

"What, am I to go first now?"

"Of course."

"Why?"

"You are the one from Egypt."

"Forward, then."

Raynal went softly up and put his foot quietly through the aperture, which he now saw was made by a panel drawn back close to the ground, and stood in the tapestried chamber. The carpet was thick; the ladies' voices favored the stealthy advance; the floor of the old house was like a rock; and Edouard put his face through the aperture, glowing all over with anticipation of the little scream of joy that would welcome his friend dropping in so nice and suddenly from Egypt.

The feeling was rendered still more piquant by a sharp curiosity that had been growing on him for some minutes past. For why was this passage opened to-night? — he had never seen it opened before! And why was Jacintha lying sentinel at the foot of the stairs?

But this was not all. Now that they were in the room both the men became conscious of another sound besides the women's voices, — a very peculiar sound. It also came from behind the screen. They both heard it, and showed by the puzzled looks they cast at one another that neither could make out what on earth it was. It consisted of a succession of little rustles, followed by little thumps on the floor.

But what was curious, too, this rustle, thump, — rustle, thump, — rustle, thump, — fell exactly into the time of the music; so that, clearly, either the rustle thump was being played to the tune, or the tune sung to the rustle thump.

This last touch of mystery inflamed Edouard's impatience beyond bearing: he pointed eagerly and merrily to the corner of the screen. Raynal obeyed, and stepped very slowly and cautiously towards it.

Rustle, thump! rustle, thump! rustle, thump! with the rhythm of harmonious voices.

Edouard got his head and foot into the room without taking his eye off Raynal.

Rustle, thump! rustle, thump! rustle, thump!

Raynal was now at the screen, and quietly put his head round it, and his hand upon it.

Edouard bursting with expectation.

No result. What is this? Don't they see him? Why does he not speak to them? He seems transfixed.

Rustle, thump! rustle, thump! accompanied now for a few notes by one voice only, Laure's.

Suddenly there burst a shriek from Josephine, so loud, so fearful, that it made even Raynal stagger back a step, the screen in his hand.

Then another scream of terror and anguish from Laure. Then a fainter cry, and the heavy, helpless fall of a human body.

Raynal sprang forward, whirling the screen to the earth in terrible agitation, and Edouard bounded over it as it fell at his feet. He did not take a second step.

The scene that caught his eye stupefied and paralyzed him in full career, and froze him to the spot with amazement and strange misgivings.

Laure parted from Edouard, and went in at the front door: but the next moment she opened it softly and watched her lover unseen.

"Dear Edouard!" she murmured: and then she thought, "how sad it is that I must deceive him, even to-night: must make up an excuse to get him from me, when we were so happy together. Ah! he little knows how *I* shall welcome our wedding-day. When once I can see my poor martyr on the road to peace and content under the good doctor's care. And oh! the happiness of having no more secrets from him I love! Dear Edouard! when once we are married, I never, never will have a secret from you again, — I swear it!"

As a comment on these words she now stepped cautiously out, and peered in every direction.

"St! — st!" she whispered. No answer came to this signal.

Laure returned into the house and bolted the door inside. She went up to the tapestried room, and found the doctor in the act of wishing Josephine good night. The baroness, fatigued a little by her walk, had mounted no higher than her own bedroom, which was on the first floor just under the tapestried room. Laure followed the doctor out.

"Dear friend, one word. Josephine talked of telling Raynal. You have not encouraged her to do that?"

"Certainly not, while he is in Egypt."

"Still less on his return. Doctor, you don't know that man. Josephine does not know him. But I do. He would kill her if he knew. He would kill her that minute. He would not wait; he would not listen to excuses: he is a man of iron. Or, if he spared her, he would kill Camille: and that would destroy her by the cruellest of all deaths! My friend, I am a wicked, miserable girl. I am the cause of all this misery!"

She then told St. Aubin all about the anonymous letter, and what Raynal had said to her in consequence.

"He never would have married her had he known she loved another. He asked me was it so. I told him a falsehood. At least I equivocated, and to equivocate with one so loyal and simple was to deceive him. I am the only sinner: that sweet angel is the only sufferer. Is this the justice of Heaven? Doctor, my remorse is great. No one knows what I feel when I look at my work. Edouard thinks I love her so much better than I do him. He is wrong: it is not love only, it is pity; it is remorse for the sorrow I have brought on her, and the wrong I have done poor Raynal."

The high-spirited girl was greatly agitated; and St. Aubin, though he did not acquit her of all blame, soothed her, and made excuses for her.

"We must not always judge by results," said he. "Things turned unfortunately. You did for the best. I forgive you, for one. That is, I will forgive you, if you promise not to act again without my advice."

"O, never! never!"

"And, above all, no imprudence about that child. In three little weeks they will be together without risk of discovery. Well, you don't answer me."

Laure's blood turned cold. "Dear friend," she stammered, "I quite agree with you."

"Promise, then."

"Not to let Josephine go to Frejus?" said Laure, hastily. "O yes! I promise."

"You are a good child," cried St. Aubin. "You have a will of your own. But you can submit to age and experience."

The doctor then kissed her, and bade her farewell.

"I leave for Paris at six in the morning. I will not try your patience or hers unnecessarily. Perhaps it will not be three weeks."

The moment Laure was alone, she sat down and sighed bitterly.

"There is no end to it," she

sobbed, despairingly. "O no! I shall never get clear of it. It is like a spider's web; every struggle to be free but multiplies the fine but irresistible thread that seems to bind me. And to-night I thought to be so happy: instead of that he has left me scarce the heart to do what I have to do."

She went back to the room, opened a window, and put out a white handkerchief: then closed the window down on it.

Then she went to Josephine's bedroom door: it opened on the tapestried room.

"Josephine," she cried, "don't go to bed just yet."

"No, love. What are you doing?"

"O, nothing particular. I want to talk to you presently."

"Shall I come out to you, Laure?"

"No, stay where you are."

Laure sat down, and took a book.

She could not read it.

Then she took some work, and put it down. Then she went to a window; not the one where she had left the handkerchief. She looked out upon the night.

Then she walked restlessly up and down the room.

Then she glided into the corridor, and passed her mother's room and the doctor's, and listened to see if all was quiet. While she was gone, Josephine opened her door; but, not seeing Laure in the sitting-room, retired again.

Laure returned softly, and sat down with her head in her hand, in a calm attitude belied by her glancing eye and the quick tapping of her other hand upon the table.

Presently she raised her head quickly; a sound had reached her ear, a sound so slight that none but a high-strung ear could have caught it. It was like a mouse giving a single scratch against a stone wall.

Laure coughed slightly.

On this a clearer sound was heard, as of a person scratching wood with the finger-nail. Laure darted to the side of the room, pressed against the wall, and at the same time put her other hand against the rim of one of the panels and pushed it laterally: it yielded, and at the opening stood Jacintha in her cloak and bonnet.

"Yes," said Jacintha, "under my cloak — look!"

"Ah! — you found the things on the steps?"

"Yes! I nearly tumbled over them. Have you locked that door, mademoiselle?"

"No! but I will." And Laure glided to the door and locked it. Then she put the screen up between Josephine's room and the open panel: then she and Jacintha were wonderfully busy on the other side the screen, but presently Laure said: —

"This is imprudent: you must go down to the foot of the stairs and wait till I call you."

Jacintha pleaded hard against this arrangement.

"What chance is there of any one coming there?"

"No matter! I will be guarded on every side."

"Must n't I stop and just see her happy for once?"

"No! my poor Jacintha, you must hear it from my lips."

Jacintha retired to keep watch as she was bid. Laure went to Josephine's room, and threw her arms round her neck and kissed her vehemently. Josephine returned her embrace, then held her out at arm's length and looked at her.

"Your eyes are red: yet your little face is full of joy. There, — you smile."

"I have my reasons."

"I am glad of it! — are you coming to bed?"

"Not yet. I invite you to take a little walk with me first. Come!" and she led the way slowly, looking back with infinite archness and tenderness.

"You almost frighten me," said

Josephine, "it is not like you to be all joy when I am sad. Three whole weeks more."

"That is it! Why are you sad? Because the doctor would not let you go to Frejus. And why am I not sad? Because I had already thought of a way to let you see Edouard without going so far."

"O Laure! O Laure! O Laure!"

"This way, — come!" and she smiled and beckoned with her finger; while Josephine followed like one under a spell, her bosom heaving, her eye glancing on every side, hoping some strange joy, yet scarce daring to hope.

Laure drew back the screen, and there was a sweet little *berceau* that had once been Josephine's own, and in it, sunk deep in snow-white lawn, was a sleeping child, that lay there looking as a rose might look could it fall upon new-fallen snow.

At sight of it Josephine uttered a little cry, not loud, but deep, — ay, a cry to bring tears into the eye of the hearer, and she stood trembling from head to foot, her hands clasped, and her eye fascinated and fixed on the cradle.

"My child under this roof! What have you done?" but her eye, fascinated and fixed, never left the cradle.

"I saw you languishing, dying, for want of him."

"Oh! if anybody should come?" but her eye never stirred an inch from the cradle.

"No! no! no! the door is locked. Jacintha watches below, there is no dan— Ah! at last! ah! poor woman!"

For, as Laure was speaking, the young mother sprang silently upon her child. You would have thought she was going to kill him! her head reared itself again and again like a crested snake's, and again and again, and again and again, plunged down upon the child, and she kissed his little body from head to foot with soft violence, and murmured, through her starting tears, "My child! my darling! my angel! oh my poor boy! my child! my child!"

I will ask my female readers of every degree to tell their brothers and husbands all the young noble did. How she sat on the floor, and had her child on her bosom; how she smiled over it through her tears; how she purred over it; how she, the stately one, lisped and prattled over it; and how life came pouring into her heart from it.

Before she had had it in her arms five minutes, her pale cheek was as red as a rose, and her eyes brighter than diamonds.

"Bless you, Laure! bless you! bless you! in one moment you have made me forget all I ever suffered in my life.

"There is a draught," cried she, with maternal anxiety; "close the panel, Laure."

"No, dear! or I could not call to Jacintha, or she to me; but I will shift the screen round between him and the draught. There, — now come to his aunt, — a darling!"

Then Laure sat on the floor too, and Josephine put her boy on aunt's lap, and took a distant view of him. But she could not bear so vast a separation long. She must have him to her bosom again.

"He is going to wake. See! see! his lovely eyes are unclosing."

"But he must not, love," said Laure: "there, put him back into this cradle, — quick."

This could not be done so adroitly but what young master did wake, and began to cry tolerably loud. Laure rocked the cradle hastily.

"Sing, Josephine," said she, and she began an old-fashioned Breton chant or lullaby.

Josephine sang with her, and, singing, watched with a smile her boy drop off by degrees to sleep under the gentle motion and the lulling song. They sang and rocked till the lids came

creeping down, and hid the great blue eyes; but still they sang and rocked, lulling the boy, — and gladdening their own hearts: for the quaint old Breton ditty was tunable as the lark that carols over the green wheat in April; and the words so simple and motherly, that a nation had taken them to heart. Such songs bind ages together, and make the lofty and the low akin by the great ties of Music and the heart. Many a Breton peasant's bosom in the olden time had gushed over her sleeping boy as the young dame's of Beaurepaire gushed now, — in this quaint, tuneful lullaby.

Now as they kneeled over the cradle, one on each side, and rocked it, and sang that ancient chant, Josephine, who was opposite the screen, happening to raise her eyes, saw a strange thing.

There was the face of a man set close against the side of the screen, and peeping and peering out of the gloom. The light of her candle fell full on this face; it glared at her, set pale, wonder-struck, and vivid, in the surrounding gloom.

Horror! Her husband's face!

At first she was stupefied, and looked at it with soul and senses benumbed. Then she trembled, and put her hand to her eyes; for she thought it a phantom or a delusion of the mind. No: there it glared still. Then she trembled violently, and held out her left hand, the fingers working convulsively, to Laure, who was still singing.

But almost at this moment the mouth of this face suddenly opened in a long-drawn breath. At this Josephine uttered a violent shriek, and sprang to her feet, with her right hand quivering and pointing at that pale face set in the dark.

Laure started up, and, wheeling her head round, saw Raynal's gloomy face looking over her shoulder. She fell screaming upon her knees, and, almost out of her senses, began to pray wildly and piteously for mercy.

Josephine uttered one more cry, but this was the faint cry of nature sinking under the shock of terror. She swooned dead away, and fell senseless on the floor ere Raynal could debarrass himself of the screen, and get to her.

This, then, was the scene that met Edouard's eyes.

His mistress on her kness, white as a ghost, trembling and screaming, rather than crying for mercy. And Raynal standing over his wife, showing by the working of his iron features that he doubted whether she was worthy he should raise her.

One would have thought nothing could add to the terror of this scene. Yet it was added to. The baroness rang her handbell violently in the room below. She had heard Josephine's scream and fall.

"Oh! she too!" cried Laure, and she grovelled on her kness to Raynal, and, seizing his knees, implored him to show some pity.

"O sir! kill us! we are culpable."

Dring! dring! dring! dring! dring! pealed the baroness's bell.

"But do not tell our mother. O, if you are a man! do not! — do not! Show us some pity! We are but women. Mercy! mercy! mercy!"

"Speak out then!" groaned Raynal. "What does this mean?"

"W—w—what?" faltered Laure.

"Why has my wife swooned at sight of me? — whose is this child?"

"Whose?" stammered Laure. Till he said that, she never thought there *could* be a doubt whose child.

Dring! dring! dring! dring! dring!

"O my God!" cried the poor girl, and her eyes glanced every way like some wild creature looking for a hole, however small, to escape by.

Edouard, seeing her hesitation, came down on her other side.

"Whose is the child, Laure?" said he, sternly.

"You too! why were we born? mercy! oh! let me go to my sister!"

Dring! dring! dring! dring! dring!

The men were excited to fury by Laure's hesitation: they each seized an arm, and tore her screaming with fear at their violence from her knees up to her feet between them with a single gesture.

"You hurt me!" said she, bitterly, to Edouard, and she left crying, and was terribly calm and sullen all in a moment.

"Whose is the child?" roared Edouard and Raynal in one raging breath. "Whose is the child?"

"IT IS MINE!"

These were not words, they were electric shocks.

The two hands that griped Laure's arms were paralyzed, and dropped off them; and there was silence.

Then the thought of all she had done with those three words began to rise and grow and surge over her. She stood, her eyes turned downwards yet inwards, and dilating with horror.

Silence!

Now a mist came over her eyes, and in it she saw indistinctly the figure of Raynal darting to his wife's side, and raising her head.

She dared not look round on the other side. She heard feet stagger on the floor. She heard a groan, too; but not a word.

Horrible silence!

With nerves strung to frenzy, and trembling acute ears, she waited for a reproach, a curse: either would have been some little relief. But no! a silence far more terrible.

Then a step wavered across the room. Her soul was in her ear. She could hear and feel the step totter, and it shook her as it went. All sounds were trebled to her. Then it struck on the stone step of the staircase, not like a step, but a loud, crashing knell; another step, another, and another: down to the very bottom. Each slow step made her head ring and her heart freeze.

At last she heard no more. Then a scream of anguish and recall rose to her lips. She fought it down for Josephine and Raynal. Edouard was gone. She had but her sister now, — the sister she loved better than herself; the sister to save whose life and honor she had this moment sacrificed her own and all a woman lives for.

She turned with a wild cry of love and pity to that sister's side to help her; and, when she kneeled down beside her, an iron arm was promptly thrust out between the beloved one and her.

"This is my care, madame," said Raynal, coldly.

There was no mistaking his manner. The stained one was not to touch his wife.

She looked at him in piteous amazement at his ingratitude.

"It is well," said she. "It is just. I deserve this from you."

She said no more, but drooped gently down beside the cradle, and hid her forehead in the clothes beside the child that had brought all this woe, and sobbed bitterly.

Honest Raynal began to be sorry for her in spite of himself. But there was no time for this. Josephine stirred; and, at the same moment, a violent knocking came at the door of the apartment, and the new servant's voice, crying: —

"O ladies! for Heaven's sake, what is the matter? The baroness heard a fall, — she is getting up, — she will be here. What shall I tell her? — what *is* the matter?"

Raynal was going to answer, but Laure, who had started up at the knocking, put her hand in a moment before his mouth.

She ran to the door.

"There is nothing the matter; tell mamma I am coming down to her directly." She flew back to Raynal in an excitement little short of frenzy. "Help me carry her into her own room!" cried she, imperiously.

Raynal obeyed by instinct; for the fiery girl spoke like a general giving the word of command with the enemy in front.

"Now put *it* out of sight, — take this, — quick, quick!"

Raynal went to the cradle.

"Ah! my poor girl," said he, as he lifted it in his arms, "this is a sorry business to have to hide your own child from your own mother!"

"Colonel Raynal!" said Laure, "do not insult a poor despairing girl! — *c'est lâche.*"

"I am silent, young woman!" said Raynal, sternly. "What is to be done?"

"Take it down the steps, and give it to Jacintha. Stay, here is a candle. I go to tell mamma you are come: and, Colonel Raynal, I never injured *you:* and if you tell my mother you will stab her to the heart and me, and may the curse of cowards light on you! may—"

"Enough!" cried Raynal, fiercely. "Do you take me for a babbling girl? I love your mother better than you do, or this would not be here. I shall not bring her gray hairs down with sorrow to the grave. I shall speak of this villany to but one person; and to him I shall talk with this, and not with the idle tongue!" and he tapped his sword-hilt with a sombre look of terrible significance.

He carried out the cradle. The child slept sweetly through it all.

Laure darted into Josephine's room, took the key from the inside to the outside, locked the door, put the key in her pocket and ran down to her mother's room: her knees trembled under her as she went.

Jacintha, sleeping tranquilly, suddenly felt her throat griped, and heard a loud voice ring in her ear: then she was lifted and wrenched, and dropped. She found herself lying clear of the steps in the moonlight: her head was where her feet had been, and her candle out.

She uttered shriek upon shriek, and was too frightened to get up. She thought it was supernatural: some old De Beaurepaire had served her thus for sleeping on her post. A struggle took place between her fidelity and her superstitious fears. Fidelity conquered. Quaking in every limb, she groped up the staircase for her candle.

It was gone.

Then a still more sickening fear came over her.

What if this was no spirit's work, but a human arm, — a strong one, — some man's arm?

Her first impulse was to dart up the stairs, and make sure that no calamity had befallen through her mistimed drowsiness. But when she came to try, her dread of the supernatural revived. She could not venture without a light up those stairs, thronged perhaps with angry spirits. She ran to the kitchen. She found the tinder-box, and with trembling hands struck a light. She came back shading it with her hands, and, committing her soul to the care of Heaven, she crept quaking up the stairs. Then she heard voices above, and that restored her more; she mounted more steadily. Presently she stopped: for a heavy step was coming down. It did not sound like a woman's step. It came farther down: she turned to fly.

"Jacintha!" said a deep voice, that in this stone cylinder rang like thunder from a tomb.

"O saints and angels, save me!" yelled Jacintha, and fell on her knees, and hid her head for security, and down went her candlestick clattering on the stone.

"Don't be a fool!" said the iron voice over her head. "Get up and take this."

She raised her head by slow degrees, shuddering.

A man was holding out a cradle to her: the candle he carried lighted up his face.

"Colonel Raynal!"

"Well, what do you kneel there for, gaping at me like that? Take this, I tell you, and carry it out of the house!"

He shoved it roughly down into her hands, then turned on his heel without a word.

Jacintha collapsed on the stairs, and the cradle sank beside her: for all the power was driven out of her body: she could hardly support her own weight, much less the cradle.

She rocked herself and groaned.

"O, what 's this? — O, what 's this?"

A cold perspiration came over her whole frame.

"O, what does this mean? What has happened?"

She took up the candle that was lying burning and guttering on the stairs: scraped up the grease with the snuffers, and tried to polish it clean with a bit of paper that shook between her fingers. She took the child out of the cradle, and wrapped it carefully in her shawl: then went slowly down the stairs, and, holding him close to her bosom, with a furtive eye, and brain confused, and a heart like lead, stole away to the tenantless cottage where Madame Jouvenel awaited her.

Laure found the baroness pale and agitated. "What is the matter? What is going on over my head?"

"Darling mother, something has happened that will rejoice your heart. Somebody has come home!"

"My son? O no! impossible! We cannot be so happy."

"He will be with you directly."

The old lady now trembled with joyful agitation.

"In five minutes I will bring him to you. Shall you be dressed? I will ring for the girl to help you."

"But, Laure, the scream, and that terrible fall. Ah! where is Josephine?"

"Can't you guess, mamma? O, the fall was the fall of the screen, and they stumbled over it in the dark."

"They! who?"

"Colonel Raynal and — and Edouard. I will tell you, mamma, but don't be angry or even mention it. They wanted to surprise us. They saw a light burning, and they crept on tiptoe up to the tapestried room, where Josephine and I were, and they did give us a great fright."

"What madness!" cried the baroness, angrily; "and in Josephine's weak state! Such a surprise might have driven her into a fit."

"Yes, it was foolish; but let it pass, mamma. Don't speak of it. He is sorry about it."

Laure slipped out, ordered a fire in the *salon*, and not in the tapestried room, and the next minute was at her sister's door. There she found Raynal knocking and asking Josephine how she was.

"Pray leave her alone a moment," said she. "I will bring her down to you. Mamma is waiting for you in the *salon*."

Raynal went down. Laure unlocked the bedroom door, went in, and to her horror found Josephine lying on the floor. She dashed water in her face, and applied every remedy; and at last she came back to life and its terrors.

"Save me, Laure! save me, — he is coming to kill me, — I heard him at the door"; and she clung, trembling piteously, to Laure.

Then Laure, seeing her terror, was glad at the suicidal falsehood she had told. She comforted and encouraged Josephine, and — deceived her.

"All is well, my poor coward," she cried; "your fears are all imaginary: another has owned the child; and the story is believed."

"Another! impossible! He would not believe it."

"He does believe it: he shall believe it."

Laure then, feeling by no means sure that Josephine, terrified as she was, would consent to let her sister come to shame to screen her, told her boldly that Jacintha had owned herself the mother of the child, and that Raynal's only feeling towards her was pity, and regret at having so foolishly frightened her, weakened as she was by illness. I told him you had been

ill, dear. But how came you on the ground?"

"Laure, I had come to myself; I was on my knees praying. He tapped. I heard his voice. I remember no more. I must have fainted again directly."

Laure had hard work to make her believe that her guilt, as she called it, was not known; and even then she could not prevail on her to come down stairs, until she said, "If you don't, he will come to you." On that Josephine consented eagerly, and with trembling fingers began to adjust her hair and her dress for the interview.

All this terrible night Laure fought for her sister.

She took her down stairs to the *salon*. She put her on the sofa. She sat by her and pressed her hand constantly to give her courage. She told the story of the surprise her own way, before the whole party, including the doctor, to prevent Raynal from being called on to tell it his way. She laughed at Josephine's absurdity, but excused it on account of her feeble health. In short, she threw more and more dust in all their eyes.

But, by the time when the rising sun came faintly in, and lighted the haggard party, where the deceived were happy, the deceivers wretched, the supernatural strength this young girl had shown was almost exhausted. She felt an hysterical impulse to scream and weep: each minute it became more and more ungovernable. Then came an unexpected turn. Raynal, after a long and loving talk with his mother, as he called her, looked at his watch, and, in a characteristic way, coolly announced his immediate departure, this being the first hint he had given them that he was not come back for good.

The baroness was thunderstruck.

Laure and Josephine pressed one another's hands, and had much ado not to utter a loud cry of joy.

Raynal explained the case. Six days were allowed him to carry his despatches to the Rhine.

He had calculated that he could do it in four days from Paris. "So I stole a day to get a peep at you and my wife. But now I must be off: not an hour to lose. Don't fret, mother, I shall soon be back again, if I am not knocked on the head."

Raynal took a jovial leave of them all. When it came to Laure's turn he drew her aside, and whispered into her ear: —

"Who is the man?"

She started, and seemed dumfounded. "No one you know," she whispered.

"Tell me, or I ask my wife."

"She has promised me not to betray me; I made her swear. Spare me now, brother; I will tell you all when you come back."

"That is a bargain, now hear *me* swear; he shall marry you or he shall die by my hand."

He confirmed this by a tremendous oath.

Laure shuddered, but she said nothing, only she thought to herself, "I am forewarned. Never shall you know who is the father of that child."

He was gone.

The baroness. "What had he to say to you, Laure? Your poor mother is jealous!"

Laure. "He was only telling me what to do to keep up your courage and Josephine's till he comes back for good."

Baroness. "Ah! Heaven grant it may be soon!"

This was the last lie the entangled one had to tell that morning. The next minute the sisters, exhausted by their terrible struggle, went feebly, with downcast eyes, along the corridor and up the staircase to Josephine's room.

They went hand in hand. They sank down, dressed as they were, on Josephine's bed, and clung to one another and trembled together, till their exhausted natures sank into uneasy slumbers, from which each in turn would wake ever and anon, with a

convulsive start, and clasp her sister tighter to her breast.

Theirs was a marvellous love. Even a course of deceit had not yet prevailed to separate or chill their sister bosoms. But even in this deep and wonderful love there were degrees: one went a shade deeper than the other now; ay, since last night. Which? why, she who had sacrificed herself for the other, and dared not tell her of it, lest the sacrifice should be refused.

It was the gray of the morning, and foggy, when Raynal, after taking leave, went to the stable for his horse. At the stable door, he came upon a man sitting doubled up on the very stones of the yard, with his head on his knees. This figure lifted its head, and showed him the face of Edouard Riviere, white and ghastly: his hair lank with the mist, his teeth chattering with cold and misery. The poor wretch had walked frantically all night round and round the chateau, waiting till he should come out. He told him so.

"But why did n't you —? Ah! I see. No! you could not go into the house after that. Be a man! There is but one thing for you to do. Turn your back on her, and forget she ever lived. She is dead to you."

"There is something to be done besides that," said Edouard, gloomily.

"What?"

"Vengeance."

"That is my affair, young man. When I come back from the Rhine, she will tell me who her seducer is. She has promised."

"She will never tell you: she is young in years, but old in treachery. Thank Heaven, we don't depend on her. I know the villain."

"Ah! Then tell me this moment!"

"It is that scoundrel Dujardin!"

"Dujardin? What do you mean?"

"I mean that, while you were fighting for France, your house was turned into a hospital for wounded soldiers."

"All the better."

"That this Dujardin was housed by you, was nursed by your wife, and all the family; and in return has seduced your sister, — my affianced!"

"I can't believe it. Camille Dujardin was always a man of honor, and a good soldier."

"Colonel, there has been no man near the place but this Dujardin. I tell you it is he. Don't make me tear my bleeding heart out: must I tell you how often I caught them together, how I suspected, and how she gulled me, blind fool that I was, to believe a woman's words before my own eyes? I swear to you he is the villain. The only question is, which of us two is to kill him?"

"Where is the man?"

"He is in the army of the Rhine."

"Ah! all the better."

"Covered with glory and honor. Curse him! O, curse him! curse him!"

"I am in luck. I am going to the Rhine."

"I know it. That is why I waited here all through this night of misery. Yes, you are in luck. But you will send me a line when you have killed him: will you not? Then I shall know joy again. Should he escape you, he shall not escape me."

"Young man," said Raynal, calmly, "this rage is unmanly. We have not heard his side of the story. He is a good soldier. Perhaps he is not all to blame: or perhaps passion has betrayed him into a sin that his conscience and honor disapprove: if so, he must not die. You think only of your wrong: it is natural. But I am the girl's brother, — guardian of her honor and my own. His life is precious as gold. I shall make him marry her."

"What! reward him for his villany!" cried Edouard, frantically.

"I don't see the mighty reward," replied Raynal, with a sneer.

"You leave one thing out of the calculation, monsieur," said Edouard, trembling with anger, — "that I will

kill your brother-in-law at the altar, before her eyes."

"*You* leave one thing out of the calculation, — that you will first have to cross swords at the altar with me."

"So be it. I will not draw on my old commandant. I could not: but be sure I will catch him and her alone some day, and the bride shall be a widow in her honeymoon."

"As you please," said Raynal, coolly. "That is all fair. I shall make her an honest wife: you may make her an honest widow. (This is what they call love, and sneer at me for keeping clear of it.) But neither he nor you shall keep *my sister* what she is now, a —" And he used a word out of the camp.

Edouard winced and groaned.

"Oh! don't call her by such a name! There is some mystery. She loved me once. There must have been some strange seduction."

"Why so?" cried Raynal, "I never saw a girl that could take her own part better than she can. She is not like her sister at all in character. Not that I excuse him. It was a dishonorable act: an ungrateful act to my wife and my mother."

"And to you."

"In four days I shall stand before him. I shall not go into a pet like you; I am in earnest. I shall just say to him, 'Dujardin, I know all!' Then, if he is guilty, his face will show it directly. Then I shall say, 'Comrade, you must marry her whom you have dishonored.'"

"He will not! He is a libertine, a rascal."

"You are speaking of a man you don't know. He *will* marry her, and repair the wrong he has done."

"Suppose he refuses?"

"Why should he refuse? the girl is not ugly or old, and if she has done a folly, he was her partner in it."

"Suppose he refuses?"

Raynal ground his teeth.

"Refuse? if he does I'll run my sword through his carcass, then and there. And the girl to a convent."

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

The French army lay before a fortified place near the Rhine, which we will call Philipsburg.

This army knew Bonaparte by report only: it was commanded by generals of the old school.

Philipsburg was defended on three sides by the nature of the ground: but on the side that faced the French line of march there was only a zigzag wall, pierced, and a low tower or two at the salient angles.

There were evidences of a tardy attempt to improve the defences. In particular there was a large round bastion, about three times the height of the wall: the masonry was new: and the very embrasures were not cut.

Young blood was for assaulting these equivocal fortifications at the end of the day's march that brought the French advanced guard in sight of the place; but the old generals would not hear of it. The soldiers' lives must not be flung away assaulting a place that could be reduced in twenty-one days with mathematical certainty. For at this epoch a siege was looked on as a process with a certain result: the only problem was in how many days would the place be taken; and even this they used to settle to a day or two on paper by arithmetic; so many feet of wall, and so many guns on the one side: so many guns, so many men, and such and such a soil to cut the trenches in on the other, — result, two figures varying from fourteen to forty. These two figures represented the duration of the siege.

For all that, siege arithmetic, right in general, has always been terribly disturbed by one little incident that occurs now and then, viz. genius *inside*. This is one of the sins of genius: it goes and puts out calculations that have stood the brunt of years. Archimedes and Todle-ben were, no doubt, clever men in their way, and good citizens, yet one characteristic of delicate men's minds they

lacked, — veneration. They showed an utter disrespect for the wisdom of the ancients, deranged the calculations which so much learning and patient thought had hallowed, disturbed the minds of white-haired veterans, took sieges out of the grasp of science, and plunged them back into the field of the wildest conjecture.

Our generals then sat down at fourteen hundred yards' distance, and planned the trenches artistically, and directed them to be cut at artful angles, and so creep nearer and nearer the devoted town. Then the Prussians, whose hearts had been in their shoes at first sight of the French shakos, plucked up, and they turned, not the garrison only, but the population of the town, into engineers and masons. Their fortifications grew almost as fast as the French trenches.

The first day of the siege, a young but distinguished brigadier in the French army rode to the quarters of General Raimbaut, who commanded his division, and was his personal friend, and respectfully but firmly entreated the general to represent to the commander-in-chief the propriety of assaulting that new bastion, before it should become dangerous.

"My brigade shall carry it in fifteen minutes, general."

"What, cross all that open under fire? one half your brigade would never reach the bastion."

"The other half would take it, general."

"That is very doubtful."

"And the next day you would have the town."

General Raimbaut refused to forward the young colonel's proposal to head-quarters.

"I will not subject you to *two* refusals in one matter," said he, kindly.

The young colonel lingered. He said, respectfully: "One question, general: when that bastion cuts its teeth will it be any easier to take than now?"

"Certainly: it will always be easier to take it from the sap than to cross the open under fire to it, and take it. Come, colonel, to your trenches, and if your friend should cut its teeth, you shall have a battery in your attack that will set its teeth on edge, — ha! ha!"

The young colonel did not echo his chief's humor; he saluted gravely, and returned to the trenches.

The next morning, three fresh tiers of embrasures grinned one above another at the besiegers. The besieged had been up all night, and not idle. In half these apertures, black muzzles showed themselves.

The bastion had cut its front teeth.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THIRTEENTH day of the siege.

The trenches were within four hundred yards of the enemy's guns, and it was hot work in them. The enemy had three tiers of guns in the round bastion, and on the top they had got a long 48-pounder, which they worked with a swivel joint, or something, and threw a great roaring shot into any part of the French lines.

As to the commander-in-chief and his generals, they were dotted about a long way in the rear, and no shot came as far as them; but in the trenches the men began now to fall fast, especially on the left attack, which faced the round bastion. Our young colonel had got his heavy battery, and every now and then he would divert the general efforts of the bastion, and compel it to concentrate its attention on him by pounding away at it till it was all in sore places. But he meant it worse mischief than that; still, as heretofore, regarding it as the key to Philipsburg. He had got a large force of engineers at work driving a mine towards it: and to this he trusted more than to breaching it, for the bigger holes he made in it by day were all stopped at night by the towns-people.

This colonel was not a favorite in

the division to which his brigade belonged. He was a good soldier, but a dull companion. He was also accused of *hauteur* and of an unsoldierly reserve with his brother officers.

Some loose-tongued ones even called him a milksop, because he was constantly seen conversing with the priest, — he who had nothing to say to an honest soldier.

Others said, "No, hang it! he is not a milksop: he is a tried soldier: he is a sulky beggar all the same." Those under his immediate command were divided in opinion about him. There was something about him they could not understand. Why was his sallow face so stern, so sad? and why with all that was his voice so gentle? The few words that did fall from his mouth were prized. One old soldier used to say, "I would rather have a word from our brigadier than from the commander-in-chief." Others thought he must at some part of his career have pillaged a church, taken the altar-piece, and sold it to a picture-dealer in Paris, or whipped the earrings out of the Madonna's ear, or admitted the female enemy to quarter upon ungenerous conditions, this or some such crime to which we poor soldiers are liable: and now was committing the mistake of remording himself about it. "Always alongside the chaplain, you see!"

This cold and silent man had won the heart of the most talkative sergeant in the French army. Sergeant La Croix protested with many oaths that all the best generals of the day had commanded him in turn, and that his present colonel was the first that had succeeded in inspiring him with unlimited confidence. "He knows every point of war, — this one," said La Croix; "I heard him beg and pray for leave to storm this thundering bastion before it was armed: but no! the old muffs would be wiser than our colonel. So now here we are kept at bay by a place that Julius Cæsar and Cannibal would n't have made two bites at apiece; no more would I if I was the old boy out there behind the hill." In such terms do sergeants denote commanders-in-chief — at a distance. A talkative sergeant has more influence with the men than the Minister of War is perhaps aware: on the whole, the 22d Brigade would have followed its gloomy colonel to grim death and a foot farther.

One thing gave these men a touch of superstitious reverence for their commander. He seemed to them free from physical weakness. He never *sat down* to dinner, and seemed never to sleep. At no hour of the day or night were the sentries safe from his visits.

Very annoying. But, after a while, it led to keen watchfulness: the more so that the sad and gloomy colonel showed by his manner he appreciated it. Indeed, one night he even opened his marble jaws, and told Sergeant La Croix that a watchful sentry was an important soldier, not to his brigade only, but to the whole army. Judge whether the maxim, and the implied encomium, did not circulate next morning with additions.

16th day of the siege. The round bastion opened fire at eight o'clock, not on the opposing battery, but on the right of the French attack. Its advanced position enabled a portion of its guns to rake these trenches slant-wise; and depressing its guns it made the round shot strike the ground first and *ricochet* over.

On this our colonel opened on them with all his guns: one of these he served himself. Among his other warlike accomplishments, he was a wonderful shot with a cannon. He showed them capital practice this morning: drove two embrasures into one, and knocked about a ton of masonry off the parapet. Then, taking advantage of this, he served two of his guns with grape, and swept the enemy off the top of the bastion, and kept it clear. He made it so hot they could not work the upper guns. Then they turned the other two tiers

all upon him, and at it both sides went, ding, dong, till the guns were too hot to be worked. So then Sergeant La Croix popped his head up from the battery, and showed the enemy a great white plate. This was meant to convey to them an invitation to dine with the French army: the other side of the table, of course.

To the credit of Prussian intelligence be it recorded, that this pantomimic hint was at once taken, and both sides went to dinner.

The fighting colonel, however, remained in the battery, and kept a detachment of his gunners employed cooling and loading the guns and repairing the touch-holes. He ordered his two cutlets and his glass of water into the battery.

Meantime the enemy fired a single gun at long intervals, as much as to say, "We had the last word." Let trenches be cut ever so artfully, there will be a little space exposed here and there at the angles. These spaces the men are ordered to avoid, or whip quickly across them into cover.

Now the enemy had just got the range of one of these places with their solitary gun, and had already dropped a couple of shot right on to it. A camp follower with a tray, two cutlets, and a glass of water came to this open space just as a puff of white smoke burst from the bastion. Instead of instantly seeking shelter till the shot had struck, he in his inexperience thought the shot must have struck, and all danger be over. He stayed there musing, instead of pelting under cover: the shot (18lb.) struck him right on the breast, knocked him into spillekens, and sent the mutton-chops flying.

The human fragments lay quiet, ten yards off. But a soldier that was eating his dinner kicked it over, and jumped up at the side of "Death's Alley" (as it was christened next minute), and danced and yelled with pain.

"Haw! haw! haw!" roared a soldier from the other side of the alley.

"What is that?" cried Sergeant La Croix. "What do you laugh at, Private Cadel?" said he, sternly, for, though he was too far in the trench to see, he had heard that horrible sound a soldier knows from every other, — the "thud" of a round shot striking man or horse.

"Sergeant," said Cadel, respectfully, "I laugh to see Private Dard, that got the wind of the shot, dance and sing, when the man that got the shot itself does not say a word."

"The wind of the shot, you rascal!" roared Private Dard: "look here!" and he showed the blood running down his face.

The shot had actually driven a splinter of bone out of the sutler into Dard's temple.

"I am the unluckiest fellow in the army," remonstrated Dard; and he stamped in a circle.

"Seems to me you are only the second unluckiest this time," said a young soldier with his mouth full; and, with a certain dry humor, he pointed vaguely over his shoulder with the fork towards the corpse.

The trenches laughed and assented.

This want of sympathy and justice irritated Dard.

"You cursed fools!" cried he. "He is gone where we must all go, — without any trouble. But look at me. I am always getting barked. Dogs of Prussians! they pick me out among a thousand. I shall have a headache all the afternoon, you see else."

"Some of our heads would never have ached again: but Dard had a good thick skull."

Dard pulled out his spilleken savagely.

"I 'll wrap it up in paper for Jacintha," said he. "Then that will learn her what a poor soldier has to go through."

Even this consolation was denied Private Dard.

Corporal Coriolanus Gand, a bit of an infidel from Lyons, who sometimes amused himself with the Breton's superstition, told him, with a grave face,

that the splinter belonged, not to him, but to the sutler, and, though so small, was doubtless a necessary part of his frame. For a broken link is a broken chain.

"It will be a bone of contention between you two," said he; "especially at midnight. *He will be always coming back to you for it.*"

"There, take it away!" said the Breton, hastily, "and bury it with the poor fellow."

Sergeant La Croix presented himself before the colonel with a rueful face, and saluted him and said: —

"Colonel, your dinner has been spilt, — a shot from the bastion."

"No matter," said the colonel. "Get me a piece of bread instead."

Returning from this, La Croix found Cadel sitting on one side of Death's Alley, and Dard with his head bound up on the other. They had got a bottle which each put up in turn wherever he fancied the next round shot would strike, and they were betting their afternoon rations, which would get the Prussians to hit the bottle first.*

La Croix pulled their ears playfully.

"Time is up for playing marbles," said he. "Mizzle, and play at round shot"; and he bundled them off into the battery.

It was an hour past midnight: a cloudy night. The moon was up, but seen only by fitful gleams. A calm, peaceful silence reigned.

Dard was sentinel in the battery.

An officer going his rounds found the said sentinel flat instead of vertical. He stirred him with his scabbard, and up jumped Dard.

"It 's all right, sergeant. O Lord! it 's the colonel. I was n't asleep, colonel."

"I have not accused you. But you will explain what you were doing."

"Colonel," said Dard, all in a flutter, "I was taking a squint at them, because I saw something."

"What?"

"Colonel, the beggars are building a wall."

"Where?"

"Between us and the bastion."

"Show me."

"I can't, colonel; the moon has gone in: but I did see it."

"How long was it?"

"About a hundred yards."

"How high?"

"Colonel, it was ten feet high if it was an inch."

"Have you good sight?"

"La! colonel, was n't I a bit of a poacher before I took to the bayonet!"

"Good! Now reflect. If you persist, I turn out the brigade on your information."

"I 'll stand the fire of a corporal's guard at break of day, if I make a mistake now," said Dard.

The colonel glided away, called his captain and first lieutenants, and said two words in each ear, that made them spring off their backs.

Dard, marching to and fro, musket on shoulder, found himself suddenly surrounded by grim, silent, but deadly eager soldiers, that came pouring like bees into the open space behind the battery. The officers came round the colonel.

"Attend to two things," said he to the captains. "Don't fire till they are within ten yards: and don't follow them unless I lead you."

The men were then told off by companies, some to the battery, some to the trenches, some were kept on each side Death's Alley, ready for a rush.

They were not all of them placed, when those behind the parapet saw something deepen the gloom of night, some fourscore yards to the front; it was like a line of black ink suddenly drawn upon a sheet covered with Indian ink.

It seemed quite stationary. The novices wondered what it was.

The veterans muttered, "Three deep."

* So deep an impression had the above melancholy incident made upon these two soldiers.

Though it looked stationary, it got blacker and blacker. The soldiers of the 22d Brigade griped their muskets hard, and set their teeth, and the sergeants had much ado to keep them quiet.

All of a sudden, a loud yell on the right of the brigade, two or three single shots from the trenches in that direction, followed by volley, the cries of wounded men, and the fierce hurrahs of an attacking party.

Our colonel knew too well those sounds: the next parallel had been surprised, and the Prussian bayonet was now silently at work.

Disguise on the part of the enemy was no longer possible. At the first shot, a guttural voice was heard to give a word of command. There was a sharp rattle, and in a moment the thick black line was tipped with steel.

A roar and a rush, and the Prussian line three deep came furiously like a huge steel-pointed wave at the French lines. A tremendous wave of fire rushed out to meet that wave of steel; a crash of two hundred muskets, and all was still. Then you could see through the black steel-tipped line in a hundred frightful gaps, and the ground sparkled with bayonets, and the air rang with the cries of the wounded.

A tremendous cheer from the brigade, and the colonel charged at the head of his column, out by Death's Alley.

The broken wall was melting away into the night. The colonel wheeled his men to the right: one company, led by the impetuous young Captain Jullien, followed the flying enemy.

The other attack had been only too successful. They shot the sentries, and bayoneted many of the soldiers in their tents: others escaped by running to the rear, and some into the next parallel.

Several, half dressed, snatched up their muskets, killed one Prussian, and fell riddled like sieves.

A gallant officer got a company together into the place of arms and formed in line.

Half the Prussian force went at them, the rest swept the trenches: the French company delivered a deadly volley, and the next moment clash the two forces crossed bayonets, and a silent deadly stabbing match was played: the final result of which was inevitable. The Prussians were five to one. The gallant officer and the poor fellows did their duty so stoutly, had no thought left but to die hard, when suddenly a roaring cheer seemed to come from the rear rank of the enemy. "France! France!" The 24th Brigade was seen leaping and swarming over the trenches in the Prussian rear. The Prussians wavered. "France!" cried the little party, that were being overpowered, and they charged in their turn, with such fury that in two seconds the two French corps went through the enemy's centre like paper, and their very bayonets clashed together, in more than one Prussian body.

Broken then in two fragments, the Prussian corps ceased to exist as a military force. The men fled, each his own way, back to the fort, and many flung away their muskets, for French soldiers were swarming in from all quarters. At this moment, bang! bang! bang! from the bastion.

"They are firing on my brigade," said our colonel. "Who has led his company there against my orders? Captain Neville, into the battery, and fire twenty rounds at the bastion. Aim at the flashes from their middle tier."

"Yes, colonel."

The battery opened with all its guns on the bastion. The right attack followed suit. The town answered, and a furious cannonade roared and blazed all down both lines till daybreak. Hell seemed broke loose.

Captain Jullien had followed the flying foe, but could not come up with them; and, as the enemy had

prepared for every contingency, the fatal bastion, after first throwing a rocket or two to discover their position, poured showers of grape into them, killed many, and would have killed more, but that Captain Neville and his gunners happened by mere accident to dismount one gun, and to kill a couple of gunners at the other. This gave the remains of the company time to disperse and run back. When the men were mustered, Captain Jullien and twenty-five of his company did not answer to their names. At daybreak they were visible from the trenches, lying all by themselves within eighty yards of the bastion.

A flag of truce from the fort.

The dead removed on both sides, and buried. Some Prussian officers strolled into the French lines. Civilities and cigars exchanged: "*Bon jour*," "*Gooten daeg*," and at it again, ding dong all down the line, blazing and roaring.

At twelve o'clock they had got a man on horseback, on top of a hill, with colored flags in his hand, making signals.

"What are they up to now?" inquired Dard.

"You will see," said La Croix, affecting mystery: he knew no more than the other.

Presently off went Long Tom on the top of the bastion, and the shot came roaring over the heads of the speakers.

The flags were changed, and off went Long Tom again at an elevation.

Ten seconds had scarcely elapsed, when a tremendous explosion took place on the French right. Long Tom was throwing red-hot shot: one had fallen on a powder wagon and blown it to pieces, and killed two poor fellows and a horse, and turned an artillery-man at some distance into a nigger parson; but did him no great harm; only took him three days to get the powder out of his clothes with pipe clay, and his face with raw potato peel.

When the tumbril exploded, the Prussians could be heard to cheer, and they turned to and fired every iron spout they owned. Long Tom worked all day.

They got him into a corner where the guns of the battery could not hit them or him, and there was his long muzzle looking towards the sky, and sending half a hundred-weight of iron up into the clouds, and plunging down a mile off into the French lines.

And, at every shot, the man on horseback made signals to let the gunners know where the shot fell.

At last, about four in the afternoon they threw a forty-eight-pound shot slap into the commander-in-chief's tent, a mile and a half behind the trenches.

Down comes a glittering *aide-de camp* as hard as he can gallop.

"Colonel Dujardin, what are ye about, sir? *Your bastion* has thrown a round shot into the commander-in-chief's tent."

The colonel did not appear so staggered as the *aide-de-camp* expected.

"Ah! indeed!" said he, quietly. "I observed they were trying distances."

"Must not happen again, colonel. You must drive them from the gun!"

"How, monsieur?"

"Why, where is the difficulty?"

"If you will do me the honor to step into the battery, I will show you," said the colonel.

"If you please, sir," said the *aide-de-camp*, stiffly.

Colonel Dujardin took him to the parapet, and began, in a calm, painstaking way, to show him how and why none of his guns could be brought to bear upon Long Tom.

In the middle of the explanation, a melodious sound was heard in the air above them, like a swarm of Brobdingnag bees.

"What is that?" inquired the *aide-de-camp*.

"What? I see nothing."

"That humming noise."

"O, that! Prussian bullets. Ah! by the by, it is a compliment to your uniform, monsieur; they take you for some one of importance. Well, as I was observing — "

"Your explanation is sufficient, colonel; let us get out of this. Ha! ha! you are a cool hand, colonel, I must say. But your battery is a warm place enough: I shall report it so at head-quarters."

The grim colonel relaxed.

"Captain," said he, politely, "you shall not have ridden to my post in vain. Will you lend me your horse for ten minutes?"

"Certainly; and I will inspect your trenches meantime."

"Do so: and be so good as to avoid that angle: it is exposed, and the enemy have got the range to an inch."

Colonel Dujardin slipped into his quarters: off with his half-dress jacket and his dirty boots, and presently out he came full fig, glittering brighter than the other, with one French and two foreign orders shining on his breast, mounted the *aide-de-camp's* horse and away full pelt.

Admitted, after some little delay, into the generalissimo's tent, Dujardin found the old gentleman surrounded by his staff, and wroth: nor was the danger to which he had been exposed his sole cause of ire.

The shot had burst through his canvas, struck a table on which was a large inkstand, and had squirted the whole contents over the despatches he was writing for Paris.

Now, this old gentleman prided himself upon the neatness of his despatches: a blot on his paper darkened his soul.

Colonel Dujardin expressed his profound regret.

Commander-in-chief. "I have a great deal of writing to do, as you are aware, and when I am writing I like to be quiet."

Colonel Dujardin assented respectfully to the justice of this. He then explained at full length why he could not bring a gun in the battery to silence Long Tom, and quietly asked to be permitted to run a gun out of the trenches, and take a shot at the offender.

"It is a point-blank distance, and I have a new gun, with which a man ought to be able to hit his own ball at three hundred yards."

The commander hesitated.

"I cannot have the men exposed."

"I engage not to lose a man, except — except him who fires the gun. *He* must take his chance."

"Well, colonel, it must be done by volunteers. The men must not be *ordered* out on such a service as that."

Colonel Dujardin bowed and retired.

"Volunteers to go out of the trenches!" cried Sergeant La Croix, in a stentorian voice, standing erect as a poker, and swelling with importance.

There were fifty offers in less than as many seconds.

"Only twelve allowed to go," said the sergeant; "and I am one," added he, adroitly inserting himself.

A gun was taken down, placed on a carriage, and posted near Death's Alley, but out of the line of fire.

The colonel himself superintended the loading of this gun; and, to the surprise of the men, had the shot weighed first, and then weighed out the powder himself.

He then waited quietly a long time till the bastion pitched one of its periodical shots into Death's Alley: but no sooner had the shot struck, and sent the sand flying past the two lanes of curious noses, than Colonel Dujardin jumped upon the gun and waved his cocked hat: at this preconcerted signal, his battery opened fire on the bastion, and the battery to his right opened on the wall that fronted them; and the colonel gave the word to run the gun out of the trenches. They ran it out into the cloud of smoke their own guns were

belching forth, unseen by the enemy; but they had no sooner twisted it into the line of Long Tom, than the smoke was gone, and there they were, a fair mark.

"Back into the trenches, all but one!" roared Dujardin.

And in they ran like rabbits.

"Quick! the elevation."

Colonel Dujardin and La Croix raised the muzzle to the mark,—hoo! hoo! hoo! ping! ping! ping! came the bullets about their ears.

"Away with you!" cried the colonel, taking the linstock from him.

Then Colonel Dujardin, fifteen yards from the trenches, in full blazing uniform, showed two armies what one intrepid soldier can do. He kneeled down and adjusted his gun, just as he would have done in a practising-ground. He had a pot shot to take, and a pot shot he would take. He ignored three hundred muskets that were levelled at him. He looked along his gun, adjusted it, and readjusted to a hair's-breadth. The enemy's bullets pattered over it, still he adjusted and readjusted. His men were groaning and tearing their hair inside at his danger.

At last it was levelled to his mind, and then his movements were as quick as they had hitherto been slow. In a moment he stood erect in the half-fencing attitude of a gunner, and his linstock at the touch-hole: a huge tongue of flame, a volume of smoke, a roar, and the iron thunderbolt was on its way, and the colonel walked haughtily but rapidly back to the trenches: for in all this no bravado. He was there to make a shot; not to throw a chance of life away watching the effect.

Ten thousand eyes did that for him.

Both French and Prussians risked their own lives craning out to see what a colonel in full uniform was doing under fire from a whole line of forts, and what would be his fate; but when he fired the gun their curiosity left the man and followed the iron thunderbolt.

For two seconds all was uncertain: the ball was travelling.

Tom gave a rear like a wild horse, his protruding muzzle went up sky high, then was seen no more, and a ring of old iron and a clatter of fragments was heard on the top of the bastion. Long Tom was dismounted. Oh! the roar of laughter and triumph from one end to another of the trenches; and the clapping of forty thousand hands, that went on for full five minutes: then the Prussians, either through a burst of generous praise for an act so chivalrous and so brilliant, or because they would not be crowed over, clapped their ten thousand hands as loudly, and thundering, heart-thrilling salvo of applause answered salvo on both sides that terrible arena.

That evening a courteous and flattering message from the commander-in-chief to Colonel Dujardin; and several officers came to his quarters to look at him: they went back disappointed. The cry was, "What a miserable, melancholy dog! I expected to see a fine dashing fellow."

The trenches neared the town, Colonel Dujardin's mine was far advanced: the end of the chamber was within a few yards of the bastion. Of late, the colonel had often visited this mine in person. He seemed a little uneasy about something in that quarter: but no one knew what: he was a silent man. The third evening, after he dismounted Long Tom, he received private notice that an order was coming down from the commander-in-chief to assault the bastion. He shrugged his shoulders, but said nothing. That same night the colonel and one of his lieutenants stole out of the trenches, and by the help of a pitch-dark, windy night, got under the bastion unperceived, and crept round it, and made their observations, and got safe back. About noon down came General Raimbaut.

"Well, colonel, you are to have your way at last. Your bastion is to

be stormed this afternoon, previous to the general assault. Why, how is this? you don't seem enchanted?"

"I am not."

"Why, it was you who pressed for the assault."

"At the right time, general, not at the wrong. In five days, I undertake to blow that bastion into the air. To assault it now would be to waste our men."

General Raimbaut thought this excess of caution a great piece of perversity in Achilles. They were alone, and he said a little peevishly: —

"Is not this to blow hot and cold on the same thing?"

"No, general," was the calm reply. "I blew hot upon timorous counsels; I blow cold on rash ones. General, last night Lieutenant Fleming and I were under that bastion, and all round it."

"Ah! my prudent colonel, I thought I should not talk long without your coming out in your true light. If ever a man secretly enjoyed risking his life, it is you."

"No, general," said Dujardin, looking gloomily down. "I enjoy neither that nor anything else. Live or die, it is all one to me; but to the lives of my soldiers I am not indifferent, and never will be while I live. My apparent rashness of last night was pure prudence."

Raimbaut's eye twinkled with suppressed irony.

"No doubt!" said he, — "no doubt!"

The impassive colonel would not notice the other's irony: he went calmly on.

"I suspected something: I went to confute or confirm that suspicion. I confirmed it."

Rat! tat! tat! tat! tat! tat! tat! relieving guard in the mine.

Colonel Dujardin interrupted himself.

"That comes *apropos*," said he. "I expect one proof more from that quarter: sergeant, send me the sentinel they are relieving."

Sergeant La Croix soon came back, as pompous as a hen with one chick, predominating with a grand military air over a droll figure that chattered with cold, and held its musket in hands clothed in great mittens. Dard.

La Croix marched him up as if he had been a file: halted him like a file, sung out to him as to a file, stentorian and inaudible, after the manner of sergeants.

"Private No. 4."

Dard. "P-p-p-present!"

La Croix. "Advance to the word of command, and speak to the colonel."

The shivering figure became an upright statue directly, and carried one of his mittens to his forehead. Then suddenly recognizing the rank of the gray-haired officer, he was morally shaken, and remained physically erect and stammered: —

"Colonel! — general! — colonel!"

"Don't be frightened, my lad. But look at the general."

"Yes! general! colonel!" and he levelled his eye dead at the general, as he would a bayonet at the foe, being so commanded.

"Now answer in as few syllables as you can."

"Yes, general, — colonel."

Colonel Dujardin. "You have been on guard in the mine."

"Yes, general."

"What did you see there?"

"Nothing, it was night down there."

"What did you feel?"

"Cold! I — was — in — water — hugh!"

"Did you hear nothing, then?"

"Yes."

"What?"

"Bum! bum! bum!"

"Are you sure you did not hear particles of earth fall at the end of the trench."

"I did, and the earth trembled."

"Ah?"

"Very gently, and this" (touching his musket) "sounded of its own accord."

"Good! you have answered well, go."

"Sergeant, I did not miss a word," cried Dard, exulting. He thought he had passed a sort of college examination. The sergeant was awe-struck and disgusted at his familiarity, speaking to him before the great: he pushed Private Dard hastily out of the presence, and bundled him into the trenches.

"Are you countermined then?" asked General Raimbaut.

"I think not, general; but the enemy's whole position is. And, general, we found the bastion had been opened in the rear, and lately half a dozen broad roads cut through the masonry."

"To let in reinforcements?"

"Or to let the men run out in case of an assault. I have seen from the first an able hand behind that part of the defences. If we assault that bastion, they will pick off as many of us as they can with their muskets: then they will run for it, and fire a train, and blow it and us into the air."

"Colonel, this is serious. Are you prepared to lay this statement before the commander-in-chief?"

"I am, and I do so through you, the general of my division. I even beg you to say, as from me, that the assault will be mere suicide, — bloody and useless."

"I will go to him at once. For the order was to come down in a couple of hours."

General Raimbaut went off to headquarters in some haste, a thorough convert to Colonel Dujardin's opinion. The colonel ordered a strong force of engineers into the mine, and went slowly to his tent. At the mouth of it, a corporal, who was also his body servant, met him, saluted, and asked respectfully if there were any orders.

"A few minutes' repose, François, that is all. Do not let me be disturbed for a quarter of an hour."

"Attention!" cried François. "Colonel wants to sleep."

"He shall hear the gnats' wings for us," answered an honest soldier.

The tent was sentinelled, and Dujardin was alone with the past.

Then had the fools, that took (as fools always do) deep sorrow for sullenness, seen the fiery soldier droop, and his sallow face fall into haggard lines, and his martial figure shrink, and heard his stout heart sigh!! He took a letter from his bosom: it was almost torn to pieces. He had read it a thousand times: yet he read it again. A part of the sweet, sad words ran thus: —

"*We must bow! We can never be happy together on earth: let us make Heaven our friend, — this is still left us, — not to blush for our love, to do our duty, and to die!*"

"How tender but how firm," thought Camille. "I might agitate, taunt, grieve her I love, but I should not shake her. No! God and the saints to my aid! They saved me from a crime I now shudder at! and they have given me the good chaplain: he prays with me, he weeps for me. His prayers still my beating heart. I wish he was here now! Yes, poor suffering angel! I read your will in these tender but bitter words, — you prefer duty to love: and one day you will forget me: not yet awhile, but it will be so. It wounds me when I think of it: but I must bow! Your will is sacred. I must rise to your level, with God's help: not drag you down to mine."

Then the soldier that stood between two armies in a hail of bullets, and fired a master-shot, took a little book of offices in one hand, — the chaplain had given it him, — and fixed his eyes upon the pious words, and clung like a child to the pious words, and kissed his lost wife's letter, and tried so hard to be like her he loved, — patient, very patient, — till the end should come.

"*Qui vive?*" cried the sentinel, outside.

"France!" was the reply.

The same voice asked the sentinel:—

"Where is the colonel commanding the brigade?"

The sentinel lowered his voice:—

"Asleep, my officer," said he; for the new-comer carried two epaulets.

"Wake him!" said he, in the tone of a man used to command on a large scale.

Dujardin heard, and did not choose such a man should think he was asleep in broad day. He came quickly out of the tent with Josephine's letter in his hand, and, in the very act of conveying it to his bosom, he found himself face to face with — Colonel Raynal.

CHAPTER XL.

Did you ever see two practised duellists cross rapiers?

How smooth and quiet the bright blades are, — they glide into contact! polished and slippery though they are, they hold each other. So these two men's eyes met, and fastened: neither spoke, each searched the other's face keenly. Raynal's countenance, prepared as he was for this meeting, was like a stern statue's. The other's pale face flushed, and his heart raged and sickened at sight of the man that, once his comrade and benefactor, was now possessor of the woman he loved. But the figures of both stood alike haughty, erect, and immovable, face to face.

Colonel Raynal saluted Colonel Dujardin. Colonel Dujardin returned the salute.

"You thought I was in Egypt!!" said Raynal, with grim significance, that caught Dujardin's attention, though he did not know quite how to interpret it.

He answered mechanically, "Yes."

"I am sent here by General Bonaparte to take a command."

"You are welcome. What command?"

"Yours."

"Mine!" cried Dujardin, his forehead flushing with mortification and anger. "What, is it not enough that you take my — hem!"

"Come, colonel," said the other, calmly, "do not be unjust to an old comrade. I take your demi-brigade: but you are promoted to Raimbaut's brigade."

"Raynal, I was wrong," said the fiery Camille, lowering his eyes for the first time this campaign.

"The exchange is to be made to-morrow," continued the other, in the clear tone of military business.

"Was it then to announce to me my promotion you came to my quarters?" and Camille looked with a strange mixture of feelings at his old comrade.

"That was the first thing."

"The first?"

"The first, being duty, you know."

"What? have you anything else to say to me then?"

"I have."

"Is it important? for my own duties will soon demand me."

"It is so important, that, command or no command, I should have come farther than the Rhine to say it to you."

Let a man be as bold as a lion, a certain awe still waits upon doubt and mystery; and some of this vague awe crept over Camille Dujardin at Raynal's mysterious speech, and his grave, quiet, significant manner.

Had he discovered something, and what? For Josephine's sake, not his own, Camille was on his guard directly.

Raynal looked at him in silence a moment.

"What?" said he, with a slight sneer, "has it never occurred to you that I *must* have a serious word to say to you?"

"Speak, Colonel Raynal! I am at your service."

"First let me put you a question,

did they treat you well at my house ?"

"At *your* house ?"

"At the Chateau de Beaurepaire ?"

"Yes," faltered Camille.

"You met, I trust, all the kindness and care due to a wounded soldier, and an officer of merit ? It would annoy me greatly if I thought you were not treated like a brother in my house."

Colonel Dujardin writhed inwardly at this view of matters. He could not reply in few words. This made him hesitate.

His inquisitor waited ; but, receiving no reply, went on : —

"Well, colonel, have you shown the sense of gratitude we had a right to look for in return ? In a word, when you left Beaurepaire, had your conscience nothing to reproach you with ?"

Dujardin still hesitated. He scarcely knew what to think or what to say. But he thought to himself, "Who has told him ? does he know all ?"

"Colonel Dujardin, I am the husband of Josephine, the son of Madame de Beaurepaire, and the brother of Laure ! You know what brings me here. Your answer ?"

"Colonel Raynal, between men of honor, placed as you and I are, few words should pass : for words are idle. Never would you prove to me that I have wronged you : I should never convince you that I have not. Let us therefore close this painful interview in the way it is sure to close. Colonel Raynal, dispose of me ; I am at your service at any hour and place you please."

"And pray is that all the answer you can think of ?" asked Raynal, somewhat scornfully.

"Why, what other answer can I give you ?"

"A more sensible, a more honest, and a less boyish one. Who doubts that you can fight, you silly fellow ? have n't I seen you ? I want you to show me a much higher sort of courage : the courage to repair a wrong, not the paltry courage to defend one."

"I really do not understand you, sir. How can I undo what is done ?"

"Why, of course you can't."

"Well, then ?"

"And therefore I stand here ready to forgive all that is past : not without a struggle, which you don't seem to appreciate."

Camille was now utterly mystified.

"Upon condition that you consent to heal the wound you have made. If you refuse — hum ! but you will not refuse."

"To the point, sir. What do you require of me ?"

"Only a little common honesty. This is the case : you have seduced a young lady."

"Monsieur !" cried Dujardin, angrily.

"What is the matter ? The word is not so bad as the crime, I take it. You have seduced her, and under circumstances — But we won't speak of them, because I mean to keep cool. Well, sir, as you said just now, it 's no use crying over spilled milk ; you can't unseduce the little fool : you must marry her !"

"M—m—marry her ?" and Dujardin flushed all over, and his heart beat, and he stared in Raynal's face.

"Why, what is the matter again ? If she has played the fool, it was with you, and no other man : it is not as if she was depraved. Come, my lad, a little generosity ! Take the consequences of your own act, — or your share of it, — don't throw it all on the poor feeble woman. If she has loved you too much, you are the man of all others that should forgive her. Come, what do you say ?"

"Am I in my senses ? Is it you, Jean Raynal, who stand there, and tell me to marry HER ?"

"I do. After all, is it such a misfortune to marry Laure de Beaurepaire ? She is young, she is pretty, she has good qualities, and she would have walked straight to the end of her days, but for you."

"Laure de Beaurepaire?"

"Yes! Laure de Beaurepaire, — Laure Dujardin that ought to be, and that is to be, if you please."

"One word, monsieur: is it of Laure de Beaurepaire we have been talking all this time!"

Raynal nearly lost his temper at this question, and the cold, contemptuous tone with which it was put, but he gulped down his ire.

"It is," said he.

"One question more. Did Laure de Beaurepaire tell you I had — had — "

"Why, as to that, she was in no condition to deny she had fallen, poor girl, — the evidence was too strong. She did not reveal her seducer's name: but I had not far to go for that."

These words of Raynal made Dujardin think the strange proposal came from Josephine. She was deceiving her husband then in some other way, and not for love of *him;* since she proposed to marry him to Laure. He sickened at the cold-blooded insult to his love. Then came a fit of jealous rage.

"They want me to marry Laure de Beaurepaire, do they? I decline," said he, coldly and bitterly.

"You decline? this passes belief. Such heartlessness as this is not written either in your actions or your face."

"I refuse."

"And I insist, in Josephine's name!"

"Perdition!"

"In the name of the whole family!"

"I refuse."

"You will not marry her?"

"Upon my honor, never."

"Your honor! you have none. You will not marry her? Would you rather die?" hissed Raynal.

"A great deal rather," was the cool and irritating answer.

"Then you shall die."

"Ah! Did not I tell you we were wasting time, monsieur?"

"You did. Let us waste no more. When and where?"

"At the rear of the commander-in-chief's tent, when you like."

"This afternoon, then — at five?"

"At five."

"Seconds?"

"What for?"

"You are right. They are only in the way, and the less gossip the better. Good by, till five"; and the two saluted one another with grim ceremony: and Raynal turned on his heel.

Camille stood transfixed: a fierce, guilty joy throbbed in his heart. His rival had quarrelled with him, had insulted him, had challenged him. It was not his fault. The sun shone bright now upon his cold despair. An hour ago life offered nothing. A few hours more, and then joy beyond expression, or an end of all. Death or Josephine! His benefactor! At that thought a chill of misgiving struck across his boiling heart.

Tramp! tramp! tramp! tramp! the even tread of soldiers marching. Dujardin looked up, and there were several officers coming along the edge of the trench, escorted by a corporal's guard.

He took a step or two to meet them. After the usual salutes, one of the three colonels delivered a large paper, with a large seal, to Dujardin. He read it out to his captains and lieutenants, who had assembled at sight of the cocked hats and full uniforms.

"*Attack by the army to-morrow upon all the lines. Attack of the Bastion St. André this evening. The 22d, 24th, and 12th Brigades will furnish the contingents: the operation will be conducted by one of the colonels of the Second Division, to be appointed by General Raimbaut.*"

"Aha!" sounded a voice like a trombone at the reader's elbow. "I am just in the nick of time. When, colonel, when?"

"At five this evening," Colonel Raynal.

"At five?"

"At five."

"Could not they choose any hour but that?" said Raynal, under his breath.

"Do not be uneasy," said Camille,

under his breath. He explained aloud, "The assault will not take place, gentlemen: the bastion is mined."

"What of that? half of them are mined. We will take our engineers in with us."

"Such an assault would be an useless massacre," continued Dujardin, reddening at Raynal's interruption. I reconnoitred the bastion last night, and saw their preparations for blowing us to the Devil; and General Raimbaut, at my request, is even now presenting my remarks to the commander-in-chief, and enforcing them. There will be no assault. In a day or two we shall blow the bastion, mines, and all, into the air."

At this moment Raynal caught sight of a gray-haired officer coming at some distance.

"There *is* General Raimbaut," said he. "I will go and pay my respects to him."

General Raimbaut shook his hand warmly, and welcomed him to the army. They were old and warm friends.

"And you are come at the right time," said he. "It will soon be as hot here as in Egypt."

Raynal laughed.

"All the better."

"Good day, messieurs. Colonel Dujardin, I presented your observations to the commander-in-chief. He gave them due attention. But they are overruled by imperious circumstances; some of which he did not reveal; they remain in his own breast. However, on the eve of a general attack, which he cannot postpone, that bastion must be disarmed, otherwise it would be too fatal to all the storming parties. It is a painful necessity. He added, 'Tell Colonel Dujardin I count greatly on the courage and discipline of his brigade, and on his own wise measures.'"

Colonel Dujardin bowed. Then he whispered: —

"Both will alike be wasted."

The other colonels waved their hats in triumph at the commander-in-chief's decision, and Raynal's face showed he looked on Dujardin as a sort of spoil-sport, happily defeated.

"Well, then, gentlemen," said General Raimbaut, "we begin by settling the proportion to be furnished by your several brigades. Say an equal number from each. The sum total shall be settled by Colonel Dujardin, who has so long and ably baffled the bastion, at this post."

Colonel Dujardin bowed stiffly, and not very graciously. In his heart he despised these old fogies, — compounds of timidity and rashness.

"So, how many men in all, colonel?"

"The fewer the better," replied the other, solemnly, "since — " and then discipline tied his tongue.

"I understand you," said the old man. "Shall we say eight hundred men?"

"I should prefer three hundred. They have made a back door to the bastion, and the means of flight at hand will put flight into their heads. They will pick off some of our men as we go at them. When the rest jump in they will jump out, and — " he paused.

"Why, he knows all about it before it comes," said one of the colonels, naïvely.

"Monsieur, I do. I see the whole operation and its result before me, as I see this hand. Three hundred men will do."

"But, general," objected Raynal, "you are not beginning at the beginning. The first thing in these cases is to choose the officer to command the storming party."

"Yes, Raynal, unquestionably; but you must be aware that is a painful and embarrassing part of my duty, especially after Colonel Dujardin's remarks."

"Ah, bah!" cried Raynal. "The colonel is prejudiced. He has been digging a thundering long mine here: and now you are going to make his child useless. We none of us like that. But when he gets the colors in his hand, and the storming column at

his back, his misgivings will all go to the wind, and the enemy after them, unless he has been committing some crime and is very much changed from what I knew him four years ago."

"Colonel Raynal," said one of the other colonels, politely but firmly, "do not assume that Colonel Dujardin is to lead the column, since there are three other claimants. General Raimbaut is to select from us four."

"Yes, gentlemen, and in a service of this kind I would feel grateful to you all if you would relieve me of that painful duty."

"Gentlemen," said Dujardin, with an imperceptible sneer, "the general means to say this: the operation is so glorious and so sure to succeed, that he could hardly without partiality assign the command to either of us four claimants. Well,then, let us cast lots."

The proposal was received by acclamation.

"The general will mark a black cross on one lot, and he who draws it wins the command."

The young colonels prepared their lots with almost boyish eagerness. These fiery spirits were sick to death of lying and skulking in the trenches. They flung their lots into the hat.

After them, who should approach the hat, lot in hand, but Raynal.

Dujardin instantly interfered, and held his arm as he was in the act of dropping in his lot.

"What is the matter?" said Raynal, sharply.

"This is our affair, Colonel Raynal."

"What, have I no epaulets?" (angrily.)

"You have epaulets, but you have no soldiers in this army."

"I beg your pardon, sir, — I have yours."

"Not till to-morrow."

"Why, you would not take such a pettifogging advantage of an old comrade as that?"

"Tell him the day ends at twelve o'clock," said one of the colonels, interested by this strange strife.

"Ah!" cried Raynal, triumphantly; "but no," said he, altering his tone, "let us leave that sort of argument to lawyers. I have come a good many miles to fight with you, general, and now you must decide to pay me this little compliment on my arrival, or put a bitter affront on me, — choose?"

While the old general hesitated, Camille replied: —

"Since you take that tone, there can be but one answer. You are too great a credit to the French army for even an apparent slight to be put on you here. The rule, I think, is, that one of the privates shall hold the hat. Hallo! Private Dard, come here — there — hold this hat."

"Yes, colonel! — Lord, here is my young mistress's husband!"

"Silence!"

And they began to draw, and in the act of drawing a change of manner was first visible in these gay and ardent spirits.

"It is not I," said one, throwing away his lot.

"Nor I."

"It is I," said Raynal, quietly; "the luck is mine."

"And I held the hat for you, colonel," said Dard, with foolish triumph.

"Ah, Raynal, my dear friend," said General Raimbaut, sorrowfully, "it was not worth while to come from Egypt for this."

Raynal. "At what o'clock?"

Dujardin. "At five."

Raynal (drawing out his watch). "Then I've no time to lose. I must inspect the detachments I am to command. But first I have some little arrangements to make. Hitherto, general, on these occasions, I was a bachelor. Now I am married."

"Married? I am sorry for it, Raynal."

"A droll marriage, my old friend; I'll tell you all about it, — if ever I have the time. It began with a purchase, general, and ends with — with a bequest, which I might as well write now, and so have nothing to think of

but duty afterwards. Where can I write?"

"Colonel Dujardin will lend you his tent, I am sure."

"Certainly."

"And, messieurs," said Raynal, "if I waste time you need not. You can pick me my men from your brigades. Give me a strong spice of old hands."

The colonels withdrew on this, and General Raimbaut walked sadly and thoughtfully towards the battery. Dujardin and Raynal were left alone.

"This postpones our affair, sir."

"Yes, Raynal."

"Perhaps forever. Have you writing materials in your tent?"

"Yes; on the table."

"You are quite sure the bastion is mined?"

"Unfortunately, I am too sure."

Raynal turned and went to the tent.

Dujardin's generosity was up in arms. He came eagerly towards him.

"Raynal, for Heaven's sake, resign this command."

"Allow me to write to my wife, colonel," was the reply, as cold as ice.

He went in and sat down, and began to write.

Dujardin folded his arms and watched him. What he wrote ran thus: —

"A bastion is to be attacked at five. I command. Colonel Dujardin proposed we should draw lots, and I lost. The service is honorable, but the result may, I fear, give you some pain. My dear wife, it is our fate. I was not to have time to make you know, and perhaps love me. God bless you!"

In writing these simple words, Raynal's hard face worked, and his mustache quivered, and once he had to clear his eye with his hand to form the letters. He, the man of iron.

He who stood there with folded arms watching him saw this, and it stirred all that was great and good in that grand, though passionate heart of his.

"Poor Raynal!" thought he, "you were never like that before on going into action. He is loath to die. Ay, and it is a coward's trick to let him die. I shall have her: but shall I have her esteem? What will the army say? What will my conscience say? O, I feel already it will gnaw my heart to death; the ghost of that brave fellow — once my dear friend, my rival now by no fault of his — will rise between her and me, and reproach me with my bloody inheritance. The heart never deceives — I feel it now whispering in my ear: skulking captain, white-livered soldier, that stand behind a parapet while a better man does your work, you assassinate the husband, but the rival conquers you. There, he puts his hand to his eyes. I must speak to him! I *will* speak to him!"

"Colonel," said a low voice, and at the same time a hand was laid on his shoulder.

It was General Raimbaut. The general looked pale and distressed.

"Come apart, colonel, for Heaven's sake! One word while he is writing. Ah! colonel, that was an unlucky idea of yours."

"Of mine, general!"

"'T was you proposed to cast lots."

"Good God! so it was."

"I thought, of course, it was to be managed so that Raynal should not be the one. Between ourselves, what honorable excuse can we make?"

"None, general."

"Colonel, the whole division will be disgraced, and forgive me if I say a large portion of the shame will fall on you."

"Help me to avert that shame, then," cried Camille, eagerly.

"Ah! that I will: but how?"

"Take your pencil and write, — 'I authorize Colonel Dujardin to save the honor of the colonels of the second divison.'"

The general hesitated. He had never seen an order so worded. He hesitated for a moment: but at last

he took out his pencil and wrote the required order, after his own fashion, i. e. in milk and water: —

"*On account of the singular ability and courage with which Colonel Dujardin has conducted the operations against the Bastion St. André, a discretionary power is given him at the moment of assault to carry into effect such measures, as, without interfering with the commander-in-chief's order, may sustain his own credit, and that of the other colonels of the second division.*

"RAIMBAUT, General of Division."

Camille put the paper into his bosom.

"Now, general, you may leave all to me. I swear to you, Raynal shall not die! — shall not lead this assault."

"Your hand, colonel. You are an honor to the French armies. How will you do it?"

"Leave it to me, general, it shall be done."

"I feel it will, my noble fellow: but, alas! I fear not without risking some valuable life or other, most likely your own. Tell me."

"General, I refuse!"

"You refuse me, sir?"

"Yes; this order gives me a discretionary power. I will hand back the order at your command; but modify it I will not. Come, monsieur, you veteran generals have been unjust to me, and listened to me too little all through this siege, but at last you have honored me. This order is the greatest honor that was ever done me since I wore a sword."

"My poor colonel!"

"Let me wear it intact, and carry it to my grave!"

"Say no more! One word, is there anything on earth I can do for you, my brave soldier?"

"Yes, general. Be so kind as to retire to your quarters; there are reasons why you ought not to be near this post in half an hour."

"I go. Is there *nothing* else?"

"Well, general, ask the good priest Ambrose to pray for all those who shall die doing their duty to their country this afternoon."

They parted. General Raimbaut looked back more than once at the firm, intrepid figure that stood there, with folded arms, unflinching, on the edge of the grave. But *he* never took his eye off Raynal. The next minute Raynal's sad letter was finished, and he walked out of the tent, and confronted the man he had challenged to single combat.

I have mentioned elsewhere that Colonel Dujardin had eyes strangely compounded of battle and love, of the dove and the hawk. And these, softened by a noble act he meditated, now rested on Raynal with a strange expression of warmth and goodness. This strange gaze struck Raynal, so far at least as this: he saw no hostile eye. He was glad of that, for his own heart was calmed by the solemn prospect before him.

"We, too, have a little account to settle before I order out the men," said he, calmly, "and I can't give you long credit. I am pressed for time."

Now, even while he was uttering these few words, quick as lightning, Camille resolved to let Raynal have his own way. What on earth did it matter to him (Camille)! And he felt a sudden and natural longing to take this man's hand: not because Raynal had once been his benefactor, but because he was going to be Raynal's benefactor.

"And things are changed, Dujardin. When duty sounds the recall, a soldier's heart leaves private quarrels. See! I come to you without anger and ill-will. Just now my voice was loud, my manner, I dare say, offensive, and menacing even, and that always tempts a brave fellow like you to resist. But now, you see, I am harmless as a woman. We are alone. Humbug to the winds! I know that you are the only man fit to command a division in this army. I know that, when you say the assault of that bas-

tion is death, death it is. To the point, then. Now that my manner is no longer irritating, now that I am going to die, Camille Dujardin, my old comrade, have you the heart to refuse me? am I to die unhappy?"

"I will do whatever you like."

"You will marry that poor girl, then?"

"Yes! yes!"

"Aha! did not I always say he was a good fellow? Clench the nail; give me your honor."

"I give you my honor to marry her, if I live."

"You take a load off me. Heaven will reward you. In one hour those poor women, whose support I had promised to be, will lose their protector: but I give them another in you. We shall not leave that family in tears, Laure in shame, and your child without a name."

"My child? Raynal?" and he looked amazed. What new deception was this?

"Poor little fellow! I surprised him in his cradle; his mother and Josephine were rocking him, and singing over him. O, it was a scene, I can tell you! My poor wife had been ill for some time, and was so weakened by it, that I frightened her into a fit, stealing a march on her that way. She fainted away. Perhaps it is as well she did: for I — I did not know what to think: it looked ugly: but, while she lay at our feet insensible, I forced the truth from Laure; she owned the boy was hers."

While Raynal told him this strange story, Camille turned hot and cold. First came a thrill of glowing joy. He had the clew to all this. He was a father. That child was Josephine's and his. The next moment he froze within. So Josephine had not only gulled her husband, but him too. She had refused him the sad consolation of knowing he had a child. Cruelty, calculation, and baseness unexampled!

Here was a creature who could sacrifice anything and anybody to her comfort, to the peace and sordid smoothness of her domestic life. She stood between two men, — a thing! Between two truths, — a double lie.

His heart, in one moment, turned against her like a stone. A musket bullet through the body does not turn life to death quicker than Raynal turned his rival's love to hatred and scorn: that love which neither wounds, absence, prison, nor even her want of constancy had prevailed to shake!

"Out of my bosom!" he cried, — "out of it, in this world and the next!"

He forgot, in his lofty rage, who stood beside him.

"What? — what?"

"No matter. Give me your hand, comrade."

"There."

"I esteem *you*, Raynal. YOU are truth, YOU are a man, and deserve a better lot."

"Don't say that," replied Raynal, quite misunderstanding him. "It is a soldier's end: I never desired nor hoped a better, — only, of course, I feel a little regret. You are a happy fellow, to have a child and to live to see it and her."

"O yes! I am very happy," replied the poor fellow, his lip quivering.

"Watch over those poor women, comrade, and sometimes speak to them of me. It is foolish, but we like to be remembered."

"Yes; but do not let us speak of that. Raynal, you and I were lieutenants together; do you remember saving my life in the Arno?"

"Yes; now you mention it, I do."

"Promise me, if you should live, to remember not our quarrel of to-day, nor anything; but only those early days, *and this afternoon*."

"I do."

"Your hand, dear Raynal."

"There, old comrade, there."

They wrung one another's hands, and turned away and hid their faces from each other, for their eyes were moist.

"This won't do, comrade; I must go. I shall attack from your position. So I shall go down the line, and bring the men up. Meantime pick me your detachment. Give me a good spice of veterans. I shall get one word with you before we go out. God bless you!"

"God bless you, Raynal!"

The moment Raynal was gone, Camille beckoned a lieutenant to him, and ordered half the brigade to form in a strong column on both sides Death's Alley.

His eye fell upon Private Dard.

"Come here," said he.

Dard came and saluted.

"Have you anybody at Beaurepaire that would be sorry if you were killed?"

"Yes, colonel: Jacintha, that used to make your broth, colonel."

"Take this line to Colonel Raynal. You will find him with the 12th Brigade."

He wrote a few lines in pencil, folded them, and Dard went off with them, little dreaming that the colonel of his brigade was taking the trouble to save his life, because he came from Beaurepaire. Colonel Dujardin then went into his tent and closed the aperture, and took the good book the priest had given him, and prayed humbly, and forgave all the world.

Then he sat down, his head in his hands, and thought of his child, and how hard it was he must die and never see him. One sad sob at this, — one only.

Then he lighted a candle and sealed up his orders of valor, and wrote a line begging that they might be sent to his sister. He also sealed up his purse and left a memorandum that the contents should be given to disabled soldiers of his brigade, upon their being invalided.

Then he took out Josephine's letter. "Poor coward," he said, "let me not be unkind. See, I burn your letter, lest it should be found, and disturb the peace you prize so highly. I too shall soon be at peace, thank God!" He lighted it, and dropped it on the ground: it burned slowly away. He eyed it, despairingly. "Ay! you perish, last record of an unhappy love: and, as you pass away, so I am going, — my soul to its Creator, my body to dust, — ay, poor letter, even so pass away my life wasted by generals not fit to command a corporal's guard, — my hopes of glory, and my dreams of love, — it all ends to-day; at nine-and-twenty."

He put his white handkerchief to his eyes. Josephine had given it him. He cried a little, not at dying, but at seeing his life thrown away.

When he had done crying, he put his white handkerchief in his bosom, and the whole man was transformed beyond language to express. Powder does not change more when it catches fire. He rose that moment, and went like a flash of lightning out of the tent. The next, he came down like a falcon between the lines of the strong column in Death's Alley.

"Attention," cried the sergeants, "the colonel!"

There was a dead silence, for the bare sight of that erect and inspired figure made the men's bosoms thrill with the certainty of great deeds to come: the light of battle was in his eye. No longer the moody colonel; but a thunderbolt of war, red-hot, and waiting to be launched.

"Officers, sergeants, soldiers, a word with you!"

La Croix. "Attention!"

"Do you know what passed here five minutes ago?"

"The attack of the bastion was settled!" cried a captain.

"It was, and who was to lead the assault? do you know that?"

"No!"

"A colonel FROM EGYPT."

A groan from the men.

"With detachments from the other brigades."

"Ah!" an angry roar.

Colonel Dujardin walked quickly down between the two lines, looking with his fiery eye into the men's eyes

on his right. Then he came back on the other side, and, as he went, he lighted those men's eyes with his own. It was a torch passing along a line of ready gas-lights.

"The work to us!" he cried, in a voice like a clarion, that fired the hearts as his eye had fired the eyes, — "the triumph to strangers! our fatigues and our losses have not gained the brigade the honor of going out at those fellows that have killed so many of our comrades."

A fierce groan from the men.

"What! shall the colors of another brigade and not ours fly from that bastion this afternoon?"

"No! No!" in a roar like thunder.

"Ah! you are of my mind. Attention! the attack is fixed for five o'clock."

"Suppose you and I were to carry the bastion ten minutes before the colonel from Egypt can bring his men upon the ground?"

A fierce roar of joy and laughter: the strange laughter of veterans and born invincibles.

"That was a question I put to your hearts, — your answer?"

The answer was a yell of exulting assent, but it was half drowned by another response, the thunder of the impatient drums, and the rattle of fixing bayonets.

The colonel told off a party to the battery.

"Level the guns at the top tier. Fire at my signal, and keep firing over our heads, till you see our colors on the place."

He then darted to the head of the column, which instantly formed behind him in the centre of Death's Alley.

"The colors! No hand but mine shall hold them to-day."

They were instantly brought him, his left hand shook them free in the afternoon sun.

A deep murmur of joy for the old hands, at the now unwonted sight. Out flashed his sword like steel lightning. He waved it to the battery.

Bang! bang! bang! bang! went the cannon, and the smoke rolled over the trenches. At the same moment up went the colors waving, and the colonel's clarion voice pealed high above all.

"Twenty-fourth, demi-brigade, — FORWARD!!!"

They went so swiftly out of the trenches that they were not seen through their own smoke until they had run some sixty yards. No sooner were they seen coming on like devils through their own smoke, than two thousand muskets were levelled at them from all the Prussian line. It was not a rattle of small arms, — it was a crash: and the men fell fast: but in a moment they were seen to spread out like a fan, and to offer less mark, and, when the fan closed again, it half encircled the bastion. It was a French attack. Part swarmed at it in front like bees, part swept round the *glacis* and flanked it. They were seen to fall in numbers, shot down from the embrasures. But the living took the place of the dead: and the fight raged evenly there. Where are the colors? Towards the rear there. The colonel and a hundred men are fighting hand to hand with the Prussians, who have charged out at the back doors of the bastion. Success there! and the bastion must fall, — both sides know this.

All in a moment the colors disappeared. There was a groan from the French lines. No! there they were again, and close under the bastion.

And now in front the attack was so hot, that often the Prussian gunners were seen to jump down, driven from their posts: and the next moment a fierce hurrah from the rear told that the French had won some great advantage there. The fire slacking told a similar tale, and presently down came the Prussian flag-staff. That might be an accident. A few moments of thirsting expectation, and up went the colors of the 24th Brigade upon the Bastion St. André.

The whole French army raised a

shout that rent the sky, and their cannon began to play on the Prussian lines, and between the bastion and the nearest fort, to prevent a recapture.

All in a moment shot from the earth a cubic acre of fire where last the bastion was seen: it carried up a heavy mountain of red and black smoke, that looked solid as marble. There was a heavy, sullen, tremendous explosion, that snuffed out the sound of the cannon, and paralyzed the French and Prussian gunners' hands, and checked the very beating of their hearts. Thirty thousand pounds of gunpowder were in that awful explosion. Then war itself held its breath, and both armies, like peaceful spectators, gazed wonder-struck, terror-struck. Great hell seemed to have burst through the earth's crust, and to be rushing at heaven. Huge stones, cannon, corpses, and limbs of soldiers, were seen driven or falling through the smoke. Some of these last even came quite clear of the ruins, ay, into the French and Prussian lines, that even the veterans put their hands to their eyes. Raynal felt something patter on him from the sky, — it was blood, — a comrade's, perhaps. Oh! war! war!

The smoke cleared. Where a moment before the great bastion stood and fought was a monstrous pile of blackened, bloody stones and timbers, with dismounted cannon, sticking up here and there.

And, rent and crushed to atoms beneath the smoking mass, lay the relics of the gallant brigade and their victorious colors.

CHAPTER XLI.

A few wounded soldiers of the brigade lay still and feigned death till dusk. Then they crept back to the trenches. These had all been struck down, or disabled short of the bastion. Of those that had taken the place no one came home.

Raynal, after the first stupefaction, pressed hard and even angrily for an immediate assault on the whole Prussian line. Not they. It was on paper that the assault should be at daybreak to-morrow. *Litera scripta manet.* This sort of leader cannot improvise.

Rage and grief in his heart, Raynal waited, chafing like a blood-horse in the trenches, till five minutes past midnight. He was then commander of the brigade, gave his orders, and took thirty men out to creep up to the wreck of the bastion, and find the late colonel's body.

Going for so pious a purpose, he was rewarded by an important discovery. The whole Prussian lines had been abandoned since sunset, and, mounting cautiously on the ramparts, Raynal saw the town too was evacuated, and lights and other indications on a rising ground behind it convinced him that the Prussians were in full retreat, probably to effect that junction with other forces which the assault he had recommended would have rendered impossible.

They now lighted lanterns, and searched all over and round the bastion for the poor colonel. In the rear of the bastion they found many French soldiers, most of whom had died by the bayonet. The Prussian dead had all been carried off.

Here they found the talkative Sergeant La Croix. The poor fellow was silent enough now. A terrible sabre-cut on the skull. The colonel was not there. Raynal groaned, and led the way on to the bastion. The ruins still smoked. Seven or eight bodies were discovered by an arm or a foot protruding through the masses of masonry. Of these some were Prussians. A proof that some devoted hand had fired the train, and destroyed both friend and foe.

They found the tube of Long Tom sticking up, just as he had shown over the battlements that glorious day,

with this exception, that a great piece was knocked off his lip, and the slice ended in a long broad crack.

The soldiers looked at this. "That is our bullets' work," said they. Then one old veteran touched his cap, and told Raynal, gravely, he knew where their beloved colonel was.

"Dig here, to the bottom," said he. "*He lies beneath his work.*"

Improbable and superstitious as this was, the hearts of the soldiers assented to it.

Presently there was a joyful cry outside the bastion. A rush was made thither. But it proved to be only Dard, who had discovered that Sergeant La Croix's heart still beat.

They took him up carefully, and carried him gently into camp. To Dard's delight the surgeon pronounced him curable. For all that, he was three days insensible, and after that unfit for duty. So they sent him home invalided, with a hundred francs out of the poor colonel's purse.

Raynal reported the evacuation of the place, and that Colonel Dujardin was buried under the bastion. He then bound a black scarf across his sick heart, and rode out of the camp.

And how came Jean Raynal to turn his back on war?

His rival was the cause.

The words Camille had scratched with a pencil, and sent him from the edge of the grave, were few, but great.

"A dead man takes you once more by the hand. My last thought, thank God, is France. For her sake and mine, Raynal, GO FOR GENERAL BONAPARTE. Tell him, from a dying soldier, the Rhine is a river to these generals, but to him a field of glory. He will lay out our lives, not waste them. Go!"

The 24th Brigade, thinned already by hard service, was reduced to a file or two by the Sampson bastion.

It was incorporated with the 12th, and Raynal rode heavy at heart to Paris.

CHAPTER XLII.

"How is my poor Josephine today, doctor?"

"Much better; she tells me she slept without laudanum last night: the first night this ten days. Nature will win the day, — with my assistance."

"No, doctor; not unless you can cure her of that which made her sicken."

"Sun, air, and exercise must complete the work," said the doctor, evasively.

"Can they cure her of her sorrow?"

"What sorrow?"

"She has a secret sorrow, and so have you, Laure."

"I? mamma?"

"Oh! I know you think me very blind, but there is something mysterious going on here, which peeps through all your precautions."

"What *do* you mean, mamma?"

"I mean, Laure, that my patience is worn out at last. I am tired of playing the part of a statue amongst you. Raynal's gloomy air as he left us; Josephine ill ever since, bursting into tears at every word; Laure pale and changed, hiding an unaccountable sadness under a forced smile: don't interrupt me, Laure! Edouard, who was almost like a son, gone off without a word. Never comes near us!"

"He is gone a journey, mamma."

"And not returned?"

"No!"

"Is that so, doctor?"

"I believe so," replied the doctor. "I called on him yesterday, and the servant said he was away."

"Good!" said the baroness. "It is clear I am to learn nothing from you two: but it does not follow I will not learn from some one else."

The doctor and Laure exchanged an uneasy look.

"This uncomfortable smiling and unreasonable crying: these appear-

ances of the absent, and disappearances of the present."

"Disappearances of the present, mamma? What *do* you mean?"

"No matter. All these mysteries of Beaurepaire will, perhaps, take less time to penetrate than those of Udolpho."

"Really," said St. Aubin, quietly, "I did not think my old friend such an adept at building mare's nests, and tormenting herself."

"It is easy to understand," replied the baroness. "I am an old woman. I have seen crooked. I hear amiss. I understand by contraries. For all that, monsieur, with your permission, I will say two words to my daughter."

"I retire, madame."

Laure nerved herself for what was to come: but the trial in store for her was a very different one from what she expected. She was bracing herself up against a severe interrogatory.

Instead of that her mother sat down, and burst into tears.

"O mamma! my sweet mamma!" cried Laure, and was on her knees at her mother's feet in a moment.

"My girl," sobbed the old lady, "may you never know what a mother feels, who finds herself shut out from her daughters' hearts!"

"O mamma! are you not in my heart?"

"No! or I should be in your confidence. Sometimes I think it is my fault. The age I was born in was strict. A mother now-a-days seems to be a sort of elder sister. In my day she was something more. Yet I loved my mother as well or better than I did my sisters. But it is not so with those I have borne in my bosom, and nursed upon my knee."

Laure's sob at this became so wild and despairing, that the baroness was afraid to say too much, though her bosom was too full of pent-up grief. Poor old lady, her heart had long been sore, but pride had kept her silent.

"Come, Laure," she said, "do not cry like that. It is not too late to take your poor old mother into your confidence. Why is this mystery and this sorrow on us? How comes it I intercept, at every instant, glances that were never intended for me? The very air is loaded with signals and secrecy. What does it all mean?"

No answer but sobs.

"Is some deceit then going on?"

No answer but sobs.

"I ask you once more: I will never descend to ask you again: give me some better reply than these sullen sobs. You will not? Well, since you will not tell me anything—"

"I cannot,—I have nothing to tell."

"Will you *do* something for me, mademoiselle?"

"O yes, mamma! anything, everything."

"I shall not ask much. I should hesitate now to draw largely on your affection. It is only to write a letter."

Laure jumped up eagerly, and went zealously for the paper and ink, thankful to her mother for giving her something she *could* do for her.

"Now write."

Laure took the pen with alacrity.

"*Dear Monsieur Riviere!*"

"O mamma! is it to him?"

"*Oblige me by coming here at your very earliest convenience.* Is it written?"

"Yes!" faltered Laure, trembling.

"Then sign my name."

"O, thank you, mamma!"

"Fold it,—address it to his lodgings."

"Yes, there. Shall I send Jacintha with it?"

"No, mademoiselle, you will not send Jacintha with it. I trust neither her nor you!—give it me. No, I trust neither the friend of twenty years, nor the servant that stayed by me in adversity, nor the daughter I

suffered for, and nursed. And why don't I trust you? *You have told me a lie!* I saw Edouard Riviere in the park two days ago, — I saw him. My old eyes are feeble, — but they are not *liars.* I saw him. Send my breakfast to my own room. I come of an ancient race: I could not sit with liars. I should forget courtesy, — you would all see my scorn in my face."

She went out, with the letter in her hand, leaving Laure sick and terrified at these stern words from lips so beloved.

Edouard Riviere fell, in one night, from happiness such as dull souls cannot imagine to deep and hopeless misery.

He lost that, which, to every heart capable of loving, is the greatest earthly good: the woman he adored, — and with her he lost those prime treasures of the soul, — belief in human goodness and in female purity.

To him there could be no more in nature a candid eye, a virtuous, ready-mantling cheek. Frailty and treachery had worn these signs of virtue and nobility too skilfully for human eye to detect: his heart was broken and his faith was gone.

For who could he now trust or believe in? Here was a creature whose virtues seemed to make frailty impossible: treachery, doubly impossible: a creature whose faults — for faults she had — had seemed as opposite to treachery as her very virtues were. Yet she was all frailty and lies.

He passed in that one night of anguish from youth to age. He went about his business like a leaden thing. His food was tasteless. His life seemed ended. Nothing appeared what it had been. The very landscape seemed cut in stone, and he a stone in the middle of it, and his heart a stone in him. At times, across that heavy heart came gushes of furious rage and bitter mortification. For his vanity had been stabbed as fiercely as his love. 'Georges Dandin!" he would cry. "You said well, old man. I wondered at your word then. Georges Dandin! curse her! curse her!" But love and misery overpowered these heats, and froze him to stone again.

The poor boy pined and pined. His clothes hung loose about him; his face was so drawn with suffering you would not have known him. He hated company. The things he was expected to talk about! — he with his crushed heart. He could not. He would not. He shunned all the world; he went alone like a wounded deer. The good doctor, on his return from Paris, called on him to see if he was ill: since he had not come for days to the chateau. He saw the doctor coming, and bade the servant say he was not in the village.

He drew down the blind, that he might never see the chateau again. He drew it up again: he could not exist without seeing it. "She will be miserable, too," he cried, gnashing his teeth. "She will see whether she has chosen well." At other times all his courage, and his hatred, and his wounded vanity, were drowned in his love and its despair, and then he bowed his head, and sobbed and cried as if his heart would burst. This very day he was so sobbing with his head on the table, when his landlady tapped at his door. He started up, and turned his head away from the door.

"A young woman from Beaurepaire, monsieur!"

"From Beaurepaire?" His heart gave a furious leap. "Show her in."

He wiped his eyes and seated himself at a table, and, all in a flutter, pretended to be the State's.

It was not Jacintha, as he expected, but the other servant. She made a low reverence, cast a look of admiration on him, and gave him a letter. His eye darted on it: his hand trembled as he took it. He turned away again to open it. He forced himself to say, in a tolerably calm voice, "I will send an answer."

After the first violent emotion, a great struggle. Her handwriting. Her mother's letter. "Ah! I see! The old woman is to be drawn into it, too. She is to help to make Georges Dandin of me. I will go. I will battle them all. I will expose this nest of depravity, all ceremony on the surface, and voluptuousness and treachery below. O God! who could believe that creature never loved me! They shall none of them see my weakness. Their benefactor shall be still their superior. They shall see me cold as ice, and bitter as gall."

He made his toilet with care, and took his hat and went to Beaurepaire as slowly as he used to go quickly once.

In the present state of things at Beaurepaire, we must go back a step.

When Josephine and Laure broke from that startled slumber that followed the exhaustion of that troubled night, Laure was by far the more wretched of the two. She had not only dishonored herself, but stabbed the man she loved.

Josephine, on the other hand, was exhausted, but calm. The fearful escape she had had softened down by contrast her more distant terrors.

She was beginning to shut her eyes again, and let herself drift. Above all, the glimpse of her boy comforted her, and the thought that in three weeks she could have him beside her in Paris.

This deceitful calm of the heart only lasted three days.

Carefully encouraged by Laure, it was destroyed by Jacintha.

Jacintha, conscious that she had betrayed her part, was almost heart-broken. She, ashamed to appear before her young mistress, and cowardlike, wanted to avoid knowing even how much harm she had done.

She pretended toothache, bound up her face, and never stirred from the kitchen. But she was not to escape: the other servant came down with a message: —

"Madame Raynal wanted to see her directly."

She came, quaking, and found Josephine all alone.

Josephine rose to meet her, and, casting a furtive glance round the room first, threw her arms round Jacintha's neck, and embraced her with many tears.

"Was ever fidelity like yours? how *could* you do it, Jacintha? and how can I ever repay it? You are my superior; it is base for me to accept such a sacrifice from any woman!"

Jacintha was so confounded she did not know what to say. But it was a mystification that could not endure long between two women, who were both deceived by a third. Between them they soon discovered that it must have been Laure who had sacrificed herself.

"And Edouard has never been here since."

"And never will, madame."

"Yes, he shall! there must be some limit even to my feebleness and my sister's devotion. You shall take a line to him from me. I will write it this moment."

The letter was written. But it was never sent. Laure surprised Josephine and Jacintha together: saw a letter was being written, asked to see it; on Josephine's hesitating, snatched it out of her hands and tore it to pieces, and told Jacintha to leave the room. She hated the sight of poor Jacintha, who had slept at the very moment when all depended on her watchfulness.

"You were going to send to *him*, unknown to me."

"Forgive me, Laure."

"O Josephine! is it come to this? WOULD YOU DECEIVE ME?"

"YOU HAVE DECEIVED ME! Yes! it has come to that. I know all. I will not consent to destroy *all* I love."

She then begged hard for leave to send the letter.

Laure gave an impetuous refusal.

"What could you say to him? foolish woman, don't you know him, and his vanity? When you had exposed yourself to him, and showed him I was nothing worse than a liar who had insulted him, — do you think he would forgive me? No! this is to make light of my love, — to make me waste the sacrifice I have made. I feel that sacrifice as much as you do, more perhaps, and I would rather die in a convent than waste that night of shame and agony. Come, promise me, no more attempts of that kind, or we are sisters no more, friends no more, one heart and one blood no more."

The weaker nature, weakened still more by ill health and grief, was terrified into submission, or rather temporized.

"Kiss me then," said Josephine, "and love me to the end."

Laure kissed her with many sighs, but Josephine smiled. Laure eyed her with suspicion. That deep smile. What did it mean? She had formed some resolution. She is going to deceive me somehow.

From that day Laure watched her like a spy. Confidence was gone between them. Suspicion took its place.

Laure was right. The moment Josephine saw that Edouard's happiness and Laure's were to be sacrificed for her whom nothing could make happy, the poor thing said to herself, "I CAN DIE."

Therefore she smiled.

The doctor gave her laudanum: he found she could not sleep: and he thought it all-important that she should sleep.

Josephine, instead of taking these small doses, saved them all up, secreted them in a phial, and so, from the sleep of a dozen nights, collected the eternal sleep; and now she was very tranquil. This young creature that could not bear to give pain to any one else prepared her own death with a calm resolution the heroes of our sex have not often equalled. It was so little a thing to her to strike Josephine. Death would save her honor, would spare her the frightful alternative of deceiving her husband, or of telling him she was another's. "Poor Raynal," said she to herself, "it is too cruel to tie him to a woman who can never be to him what he deserves. Laure would then prove her innocence to Edouard. A few tears for a weak, loving soul, and they would all be happy and forget her."

While she was in this mind, Raynal wrote from Paris that he was to be expected at any moment; "And this time," he added, "I stay a month."

Josephine gave a shudder that my female readers can understand. This letter was the last word in her death-warrant.

Her days being now counted, and her very hours uncertain, the mother's heart could not leave the world without putting her poor boy into some loving hand, and securing him kind treatment. And so it happened that she came from her room to open her heart to Laure just after the baroness went out with those bitter words. And when I say open her heart, I am wrong. Her fate was still to conceal all or a part. Laure was quick and suspicious. Laure would never consent to her dying. All she dare do was to say something to her now, that poor Laure should understand when she should be gone, and say, "This was my poor lost sister's last request."

Laure, then, stricken to the heart by her mother's words, was sitting weeping in the tapestried room when Josephine came out to her, and sat down beside her with a tender smile, and drew her to her bosom.

"I am glad I have found you alone. You are crying, love?"

"Mamma has scolded me so; and she has written to Edouard; but you have something to say to me?"

"Indeed I have, but not now. It is no time to try your courage, poor girl! You weep!"

"I can always find courage to defend you, Josephine"; and she dried her eyes directly.

"It is not that kind of courage, sister. Ah! me! was I born to give pain?"

"Speak, Josephine!"

"Give me your hand. Be brave, — my poor Laure, — this it is. I am worse than I seem. I have something here at my heart that will try the poor doctor's skill. And you know, love, life at the best is but a little candle that a breath puts out."

Laure said nothing, but she trembled and watched her keenly.

"It is about my little Edouard. What would you do with him if — if anything should happen to me?"

"What would I do with him? He is mine. I should be his mother. Oh! what words are these! my heart! my heart!"

"No, Laure; some day you will be married, and owe all the mother to your children, and Edouard is not ours only. He belongs to some one I have seemed unkind to. Perhaps he thinks me heartless. For I am a foolish woman; I don't know how to be virtuous, yet show a man my heart. But *then* he will understand me and forgive me. Laure, dear, you will write to him. He will come to you. You will go together to the place where I shall be sleeping. You will show him my heart. You will tell him all my long love that lasted to the end. *You* need not blush to tell him all. I have no right. Then you will give him his poor Josephine's boy, and you will say to him, "She never loved but you: she gives you all that is left of her, her child. She prays you not to give him a bad mother."

Poor soul! this was her one bit of little, gentle jealousy: but it made her eyes stream. She would have put out her hand from the tomb to keep her boy's father single all his life.

"O my Josephine, — my darling sister," cried Laure, "why do you speak of death? Do you meditate a crime?"

"No; but it was on my heart to say it: it has done me good."

"At least, take me to your bosom, my well-beloved, that I may not see your tears."

"There — tears? No, you have lightened my heart. Bless you! bless you!"

The sisters twined their bosoms together in a long gentle embrace. You might have taken them for two angels that flowed together in one love, — but for the tears.

They remained silently one for some minutes. Then they went to Josephine's room. Laure, however, was soon summoned out by the baroness.

She came, full of misgivings, but the mood of the baroness had changed. A sly benevolence lurked now in her features.

"Sit down by me on the sofa. Now, mademoiselle, confess! There has been a tiff between you and Edouard: a lover's quarrel?"

"Y—y—yes, mamma."

"And if I make it up for you?"

"Not for the world! — not for the world!"

"Nonsense, child!"

"Monsieur Riviere," was announced by the new servant.

Laure started up to fly.

"Sit still," said the baroness, imperatively.

Edouard came in, wan and agitated.

The baroness waved him to a seat, and took one herself, leaving Laure on the sofa.

The effrontery of Laure in facing him before her mother disgusted and enraged Edouard. "She will rue it," said he, bitterly.

"You don't see Laure," said the baroness, quietly.

He had not taken any notice of her.

Edouard stammered some excuse, rose, and bowed to Laure.

Now in performing this cold salutation he caught sight of her face: it was pale, and her eyes red. She was unhappy then.

"Monsieur Riviere," said the baroness, ceremoniously and slowly, "you

have not honored us with a visit lately."

"Excuse me, madame, I have been much occupied."

"Familiar as you were in the house, and esteemed by us, you must have a motive for abandoning us so suddenly. Make me your confidante. What is your motive? Is it Laure's fault?"

"Yes, madame."

"O yes, mamma, it is my fault. My temper!" and she cast a piteous look of supplication on Edouard.

"Do not interfere, Laure: let me hear M. Riviere."

"Madame, my temper and Mademoiselle Laure's could not accord."

"Why, her temper is charming; it is joyous, equal, and gentle."

"You misunderstand me, madame; I do not reproach Mademoiselle Laure. It is I who am to blame."

"For what?" inquired the baroness, dryly.

"For not being able to make her love me."

"O, that is it! She did not love you?"

"Ask herself, madame."

"Laure," said the baroness, her eye now beginning to twinkle, "are you really guilty of such a want of discrimination? Did n't you love monsieur?"

"No, mamma. I did not love Monsieur Edouard."

Edouard groaned.

"You tell me that, and you are crying!"

"She is crying, madame? ? ! !"

"Why, you see she is. Come, I see how this will end."

"Where are you going, mamma?"

"To my other daughter. Alas! her case is worse than yours. Monsieur Edouard, forgive me, if I leave you a moment with the enemy. I hope, in spite of her, to find you extant on my return."

She went off with knowing little nods into Josephine's room.

Dead silence.

"Monsieur," began Laure, in a faint whisper.

"Mademoiselle!"

"I thank you humbly for your generosity. But you were always generous. I felt you would not betray me."

"Mademoiselle, your secret belongs to you, not to others. I— Curse on my weakness! Adieu!"

He moved to go.

She bowed her head with a despairing moan.

It took him by the heart and held him. He hesitated, then came towards her.

"I see you are sorry for what you have done to me who loved you so, — whom you loved. O yes, do not deny it, Laure; there was a time you loved me. And that makes it worse: to have given me such sweet hopes, only to crush both them and me. And is not this cruel of you? — even now, to weep so and let me see your penitence, — when it is too late!"

"Alas! how can I help my regrets? I have insulted so good a friend."

There was a sad silence. Then, as he looked at her, her looks belied the charge her own lips had made against herself.

A light seemed to burst on Edouard from that high-minded, sorrow-stricken face.

"Tell me it is false!" he cried.

She hid her face in her hands, — woman's instinct to avoid being read.

"Tell me you were misled, then, — fascinated, perverted, — but that your heart returned to me. Clear yourself of deliberate deceit, and I will believe and thank you on my knees."

"Heaven have pity on us!" cried poor Laure.

"On us! Thank you for saying on us. See now, you have not gained happiness by destroying mine. One word: do you love that man? — that Dujardin?"

"You know I do not."

"I am glad of that; since his life is forfeited; if he escapes my friend Raynal, he shall not escape me!"

Laure uttered a cry of terror.

"Hush! not so loud. The life of Camille! Oh! if he were to die, what were to become of— O, pray do not speak so loud!"

"Own then that you *do* love him," yelled Edouard; "give me truth, if you have no love to give. Own that you love him, and he shall be safe. It is myself I will kill, for being such a slave as to love you still!"

Laure's fortitude gave way.

"I cannot bear it!" she cried, despairingly; "it is beyond my strength! Edouard, swear to me you will keep what I tell you secret as the grave? — hush! here they come."

The baroness came smiling out, and Josephine's wan, anxious face was seen behind her.

"Well," said the baroness, "is the war at an end? What, are we still silent? Let me try then what I can do. Edouard, lend me your hand."

While Edouard hesitated, Josephine clasped her hands and mutely supplicated him to consent. Her sad face, and the thought of how often she had stood his friend, shook his resolution. He held out his hand slowly and unwillingly: for what was the use taking hands when hearts were estranged?

"There is my hand," he muttered.

"And here is mine, mamma," said Laure, smiling to please her.

Oh! the mixture of feeling, when her soft warm palm pressed his. How the delicious sense baffled and mystified the cold judgment.

Josephine smiled. It was a respite.

While the young lovers yet thrilled at each other's touch, yet could not look one another in the face, a sudden clash of horses' feet was heard.

"That is Colonel Raynal," said Josephine, with unnatural calmness. "I expected him to-day."

The baroness was at the side window in a moment.

"It is he! — it is he!"

She hurried down to embrace her son.

Josephine went without a word to her own room. Laure followed her the next moment. But in that one moment she worked magic.

She glided up to Edouard, and looked him full in the face. Not the sad, depressed, guilty-looking, humble Laure of a moment before, but the old, high-spirited, and somewhat imperious girl.

"You have shown yourself noble this day. I am going to trust you as only the noble are trusted. Stay in the house till I can speak to you!"

She was gone, and something leaped within Edouard's bosom, and a flood of light seemed to burst in on him. Yet he saw no object clearly: but he saw light.

Josephine went to her room, opened a drawer, and took out a little phial. She knelt down, and was in the act of conveying the phial to her lips when the handle of the door was turned, and as the instinct of concealment was stronger even than the desire of death, she hid the phial swiftly in her bosom, and rose hastily from her knees. But this latter action was surprised by Laure.

"What are you doing, Josephine, on your knees?"

"I have a great trial to go through to-day," was the hesitating answer.

Laure said nothing. She turned paler. She is deceiving me again, thought she, and Laure sat down full of bitterness and terror; and, affecting not to watch Josephine, watched her.

"Go and tell them I am coming, Laure."

"No, Josephine, I will not leave you till this terrible meeting is over."

"Let us come then," said Josephine, doggedly, "and encounter it at once."

"Yes, Josephine, hand in hand as we used to go, when our hearts were one."

Josephine arranged her hair in the glass; woman to her last gasp. A deep voice was now heard in the sitting-room.

Josephine and Laure went to the door, paused irresolutely a moment, then entered the tapestried room.

Raynal was sitting on the sofa: the baroness's hand in his. Edouard was not there.

Colonel Raynal had given him a strange look, and said: "What, you here!" in a tone of voice that was intolerable.

Raynal came to meet the sisters. He saluted Josephine on the brow.

"You are pale, my wife; and how cold her hand is!"

"She has been ill this month past," said Laure.

"You look ill, too, Mademoiselle Laure."

"Never mind," cried the baroness, joyously, "you will cheer them all up."

"Yes," said Raynal, moodily.

"How long do you stay this time, —a day?"

"A month, mother."

The doctor now joined the party, and friendly greetings passed between him and Raynal.

But erelong somehow all became conscious this was not a joyful meeting. The baroness could not alone sustain the spirits of the party, and soon even she began to notice that Raynal's replies were short, and that his manner was distrait and gloomy. The sisters saw this, too, and trembled for what might be coming.

The gloom deepened. At last Raynal whispered: —

"Josephine, I want to speak to you alone."

The baroness did not hear, but by his whispering she divined he would speak in private to his wife.

She gave the doctor a look, and made an excuse for going down stairs to her own room. As she was going, Josephine went to her.

"Mother, you have not kissed me to-day."

"There! Bless you, my darling!"

Raynal looked at Laure. She saw she must go: but she lingered, and sought her sister's eye: it avoided her. ("She is deceiving me.") Laure ran to the doctor, who was just going out of the door.

"O doctor!" she whispered, trembling, "don't go beyond the door. I found her praying. My mind misgives me."

"What is she going to do?"

"Tell her husband — or something worse."

"What? Speak! — what do you fear?"

"I am afraid to say all I dread. She could not be so calm if she meant to live. Be near! as I shall."

She left the old man trembling, and went back to Raynal. She interrupted them just as he was saying to Josephine: —

"I was a little surprised at your reception of me, but it was my own fault."

"Excuse me," said Laure, "I only came to ask Josephine if she wants anything."

"No! — yes! — a glass of *eau sucré*."

Laure mixed it for her. While doing this, she noticed that Josephine shunned her eye, but Raynal gazed gently and with an air of pity on her.

She retired slowly into Josephine's bedroom.

"Well," said Raynal, with a heavy sigh, "first let us speak of your health, — it alarms me; and of your apparent sadness, which I do not understand. You have no news from the Rhine, have you?"

"Monsieur!"

"Do not call me monsieur; nor look so frightened. Call me your friend. I am your sincere friend."

"O yes! you always were."

"Thank you! You will give me a dearer title before we part this time."

"Yes," said Josephine, in a low whisper. And she took a phial from her bosom, and poured the contents into the glass of *eau sucré*.

"What is that?" asked Raynal.

"A soothing draught. I suffer, monsieur."

"Call me Jean."

"If you please. I suffer, Jean;

more than I can bear: this soothes my pain."

"Poor soul! But sit down and calm yourself, for I have something very serious to say."

Josephine took the seat with some reluctance. She eyed the glass wistfully. After all, she could get to it at any moment.

Raynal hesitated.

"First, have you forgiven me frightening you so that night?"

"Yes."

"It was a shock to me too: I like the boy. She professed to love him, and, to own the truth, I loathe all treachery and deceit. If I had done a murder, I would own it. A lie doubles every crime. But I took heart; we are all selfish, we men: of the two sisters one was all innocence and good faith; and she was the one I had chosen."

At these words Josephine rose like a statue moving, and put out her hand to the cup, and in one moment she would have drank, and sat patient, attending to Raynal with death coursing through her veins.

But between her and the king of terrors, into whose arms she was gliding, was a danger she dared not face.

A wasp was hovering right over the sugared death.

She drew back hastily, with a look of dismay. Raynal took up a paper-knife with zeal.

"O, do not kill it, poor thing! The window is open: make it fly away."

Raynal drove away the wasp with his handkerchief, and Josephine stretched her hand out to the glass, and, fixing her eye on Raynal to see whether he would let her, raised it slowly to her lips.

Meantime, Raynal, with his eyes gloomily lowered, said in a voice full of strange solemnity:—

"I went to the army of the Rhine."

Josephine put down the glass directly, though without removing her hand from it.

"I see you understand me, and approve. Yes! I saw that your sister would be dishonored, and I went to the army and I saw Dujardin."

"Ah! what did you say to him?" and she quivered all over.

"I TOLD HIM ALL."

"You — told him all?"

"Hush, Josephine, don't speak so loud, and come this way; there, don't fiddle with that glass, my poor soul. Drink it, or leave it alone: for I want all your attention, all your aid, all your excuses."

He took the glass out of her patient hand, and, with a furtive look at the bedroom door, drew her away to the other end of the room.

"I taxed Dujardin with her seduction; he did not deny it. I told him he must marry her?"

"Yes."

"He refused. I challenged him. He accepted."

Josephine shuddered, and shrank from Raynal.

"Do not alarm yourself. We never met."

"Ah! thank Heaven!"

"O no, that sin was spared me: indeed, before we parted, the poor fellow consented. I felt happy then. I thought I had saved the honor of our family. My wife, I have a favor to ask you. I am in distress, and embarrassment. And you can do it: for he was indifferent to you, comparatively. And I have not the courage — oh, I should feel like a thief, like a coward, before her. Will *you?*"

"What?" gasped Josephine. "You confuse, you perplex me! O, what does this terrible preparation mean?"

"It means that I shall never save the honor of your house now."

"Oh! is that all? thank Heaven!" She did not know what she was saying.

"He will never marry Laure; he will never see her more."

"I see! he told you he would never come to Beaurepaire. He did well."

"Alas! no! that is not it. I tell you he consented."

"To what? In Heaven's name!"

"To marry her. He shook hands with me, the tears in his eyes. Ah! I understand the tears in those lion eyes now, now that it is too late."

Raynal groaned.

"Wife, I was to attack the bastion. He knew it was mined. He took advantage of my back being turned. He led his men out of the trenches; he assaulted the bastion at the head of his brigade. He took it."

"Ah! it was noble: it was like him!"

"The bastion, undermined by the enemy, was blown into the air, and Dujardin is dead."

"Dead!"

"Hush! I hear Laure at the door! hush! He took my place, and is dead. Swallowed up in flames, and crushed to atoms under the ruins."

"Oh!—oh!—oh!—oh!"

Her whole body gave way, and bowed like a tree falling under the axe. She sank slowly to her knees, and low moans of agony broke from her at intervals.

"Is it not terrible?" he cried.

She did not hear him nor see him.

"Dead!—dead!—dead!"

"War! I never felt you till that hour."

"Dead!—ah!—pity!—the glass!"

She stretched her hands out, wildly. Raynal, with a face full of concern, ran to the table and got the glass. She crawled on her knees to meet it, he stirred it, and brought it quickly to her hand.

"There, my poor soul!"

Now, as their hands met, Laure threw herself on the cup, and snatched it with fury from them both. She was white as ashes, and her eyes, supernaturally large, glared on Raynal with terror.

"Madman!"

He glared back on her: what did this mean? Their eyes were fixed on each other like combatants for life and death: they did not see that the room was filling with people, that the doctor was only on the other side the table, and that the baroness and Edouard were at the door, and all looking wonder-struck at this strange sight,—Josephine on her knees, and those two facing each other, white, with dilating eyes: the glass between them.

But what was that to the horror, when the next moment the patient Josephine started to her feet, and, standing in the midst, tore her hair by handfuls out of her head.

"Ah! you snatch the kind poison from me!"

"Poison!"

"Poison!!"

"Poison!!!"

"Ah! you won't let me die. Curse you all!—curse you! I never had my own way in anything. I was always a slave and a fool. I have murdered the man I love,—I love! Yes, my husband, do you hear, the man I love!"

"Hush! daughter,—respect my gray hairs—"

"Your gray hairs! You are not so old in years as I am in agony. So this is your love, Laure. Ah! you won't let me die,—won't you? THEN I'LL DO WORSE,—I'LL TELL!"

CHAPTER XLIII.

"ENOUGH of baseness and lies! From this moment, honor to whom honor is due, shame to whom shame. Ah! there is Edouard. I am glad of it. He, who is dead,—and I will follow him, I will! I will,—he was my betrothed. He struggled, wounded, bleeding, to my feet. He found me married. News came of my husband's death,—I married my betrothed."

"Married him! my daughter?"

"Ah, here is my poor mother. And she kissed me so kindly, just now,—she will kiss me no more. Oh! I am not ashamed of marrying him. I am only ashamed of the cowardice that dared not do it in face of all the

world. We had scarce been happy a fortnight, when a letter came from Colonel Raynal. He was alive. I drove my true husband away, wretch that I was. I tried to do my duty to my legal husband. He was my benefactor. I thought it was my duty, — was it? I don't know. I have lost the sense of right and wrong. I turned from a loving creature to a lie. He who had scattered benefits on me and all this house, he whom it was too little to love, he ought to have been adored, — this man came here one night to his wife, proud, joyous, warm-hearted. He found a cradle, and two women watching it. Now, Edouard, now *monsieur*, do you see that life is *impossible to* me? One bravely accused herself. She was innocent. One swooned away like a guilty coward."

"Ah!"

"Yes, Edouard, you shall not be miserable like me. She was guilty. You do not understand me yet, my poor mother, — she was so happy this morning, — I was the liar, the coward, the double-faced wife, the miserable mother that denied her child. Now will you let me die? Now do you see that I can't and won't live upon shame and despair. Ah, Monsieur Raynal, my dear friend, you were always generous: you will pity and kill me. I have dishonored the name you gave me to keep; I am neither De Beaurepaire nor Raynal. Do pray kill me, monsieur, — Jean, do pray release me from my life!"

And she crawled to his knees and embraced them, and kissed his hand, and pleaded more piteously for death, than others have begged for life.

Raynal stood like a rock: he was pale, and drew his breath audibly: but not a word. Then came a sight scarce less terrible than Josephine's despair. The baroness, looking and moving twenty years older than an hour before, tottered across the room to Raynal.

"Sir, you whom I have called my son, but whom I will never presume so to call again. I thought I had lived long enough never to have to blush again. I loved you, monsieur. I prayed every day for you. But she who *was* my daughter was not of my mind. Monsieur, I have never knelt but to God and to my king, and I kneel to you; forgive us, sir; forgive us!"

She tried to go down on her knees. He raised her with his strong arm, but he could not speak. She turned on the others.

"So this is the secret you were hiding from me! This secret has not killed you all. Oh! I shall not live under its shame so long as you have. Chateau of Beaurepaire, — nest of treason, ingratitude, and immodesty, — I loathe you as much as once I loved you. I will go and hide my head, and die elsewhere."

At last Raynal spoke.

"Stay, madame!" said he, in a voice whose depth and dignity were such that it seemed impossible to disobey it. "It was sudden, — I was shaken, — but I am myself again, I see it all now."

"O, show some pity!" cried Laure.

"I shall be just."

There was a long, trembling silence, and during that silence and terrible agitation one figure stood firm among those quaking, beating hearts, like a rock with the waves breaking round it, — the MAN OF PRINCIPLE among the creatures of impulse.

"Rise, Madame Dujardin, sit there."

He placed her, more dead than alive, in a large arm-chair.

"Mother!"

"What! you call me mother still?"

"You are a trifle too hard upon the weak. I must be neither harsh nor weak, — I must be just.

"Madame Dujardin, you are an honest woman. But you are not open. Your fault has been cowardice and want of truth. You should have told me long ago. What had you to fear? I was your friend, and not a

selfish friend. I was not enough in love with you to cut your throat: I don't hold with that sort of love. If you had only trusted me, I would have saved you all this. You doubted me without cause. I am angry with you, and I forgive you. She does not even hear me."

"O yes, monsieur, my sister hears you. See the tears streaming from her poor eyes."

"Poor thing! I have some little comfort in store for her. First, this unfortunate marriage of ours can be annulled."

There was a general exclamation, except from Josephine.

"We have only to consent to do away with it. The notary told me so in my ear on our wedding-day: and that is what tears me when I think if she could but have been frank with me. — Ten thousand devils! that marriage shall be annulled to-morrow. But I must not stop there. I have others to be just to. If I stand here a living man, to whom do I owe it? To Colonel Dujardin, who gave his life for me. To risk life for a comrade is nothing; but to sacrifice it without hope, as he did for me, is very different. What, when he had but to fold his arms, and let me die, and by my death get the woman he loved; he gave up life and love for me, and for his own heroic sense of honor."

At these words Josephine sobbed wildly.

The just man warmed: —

"I have lived with heroes; I have fought with the brave against the brave, and I say this was a godlike action. The world has never seen a greater. If he stood there, and asked me for all the blood in my body, I would have given it him at a word. He is dead! but his widow and his child are my care, and no other man's. To-morrow I shall be in Paris, and your marriage with Dujardin shall be confirmed. Ah! weak but lofty creature. I see by your eyes that this brightens even your despair. You thought all was lost, — no! Josephine, all is never lost when honor is saved."

"Bless you! bless you! my boy blesses you by his poor mother's lips; bless —" She sank feebly back in her chair in a vain endeavor to thank him in the midst of her despair.

"What! you are grateful to me, then *do* something to please me. Words go for little with me."

The poor soul revived a little when he told her she could do something for him.

"Promise me something."

"I will."

"Not to attempt self-destruction again. Come, promise me upon your honor."

"I promise," sighed Josephine.

"Now, mother, and you, Edouard, we will leave her with the doctor and her sister. Come," and he took them all out of the room sharp. Looking round he caught sight of Edouard's face; it was radiant with joy. Raynal started at sight of it, — then he reflected and muttered: "O, ay! I see!"

Such is life.

I drop the curtain on the sad scene that followed in the room he left: no words could give any idea of Josephine's sorrow. Fear and misgivings, and the burning sense of deceit gnawing an honorable heart, were gone. Grief reigned alone.

The marriage was annulled before the mayor; and three days afterwards Raynal, by his influence, turned a balanced scale, and got the consummated marriage formally allowed in Paris.

With a delicacy for which one would hardly have given him credit, he never came near Beaurepaire till all this was settled; but he brought the document from Paris that made Josephine the Widow Dujardin, and her boy the heir of Beaurepaire; and the moment she was really Madame Dujardin he avoided her no longer: and he became a comfort to her, instead of a terror.

The dissolution of the marriage was a great tie between them. So much that, seeing how much she looked up to Raynal, the doctor said one day to the baroness: "If I know anything of human nature, they will marry again, provided none of you give her a hint which way her heart is turning."

They who have habituated themselves to live for others can suffer as well as do great things. Josephine kept alive. A passion such as hers, in a selfish nature, must have killed her.

Even as it was, she often said, "It is hard to live."

Then they used to talk to her of her boy. Would she leave him — Camille's boy — without a mother? And these words were never spoken to her quite in vain.

Her mother forgave her, and loved her as before. Who could be angry with her long? The air was no longer heavy with lies. Wretched as she was, she breathed lighter. Joy and hope were gone. Sorrowful peace was coming. When the heart comes to this, nothing but Time can cure; but what will not Time do? O, what wounds he has healed! His cures are incredible.

Yet are there a few hearts in nature so faithful that they carry their early wound to their late graves.

Who then can predict the fate of Josephine Dujardin? the woman of women, — the disingenuous, the true-hearted?

It was about a fortnight later. The little party sat one day, peaceful but silent and sad, in the Pleasance, under the great oak.

Two soldiers came in at the gate. They walked feebly, for one was lame, and leaned upon the other, who was pale and weak, and leaned upon a stick.

"Soldiers," said Raynal, "and invalided."

"Give them food and wine," said Josephine.

Laure went towards them, but she had scarcely taken three steps ere she cries out: —

"It is Dard! it is poor Dard! Come here, Dard: go to my sister."

Dard limped towards them, leaning upon Sergeant La Croix. A bit of Dard's heel had been shot away.

Laure ran to the kitchen.

"Jacintha, bring out a table into the Pleasance, and something for two guests to eat."

The soldiers came slowly to the Pleasance, and were welcomed and invited to sit down, and received with respect: for France is not like England, — she honors the humblest of her brave.

Soon Jacintha came out with a little round table in her hands. She dropped it at sight of Dard, and uttered a cry of joy, then affected a composure which was belied by her shaking hands and her glowing cheek.

After a few words of homely welcome, — not eloquent, but very sincere, — she went off with her apron to her eyes. She reappeared with the good cheer, and served the poor fellows with radiant zeal.

"What regiment?" asked Raynal.

Dard was about to answer, but his superior stopped him severely; then, rising with his hand to his forehead, he replied, with pride: —

"Twenty-fourth Brigade, second company. We were cut up at Philipsburg, and incorporated with the twelfth.

Raynal regretted his question: for Josephine's eye was instantly fixed on Sergeant La Croix, with an expression words cannot paint. Yet she showed more composure, real or forced, than he expected.

"Heaven sends him," said she. "My friend, tell me, were you — ah!"

Colonel Raynal interfered hastily.

"Think what you do, my poor friend. He can tell you nothing but what we know: not so much, in fact, as we know, for now I look at him I think this is the very sergeant we found lying insensible under the bas-

tion. He must have been struck before the bastion was taken even."

"I was, colonel, I was. I remember nothing but losing my senses, and feeling the colors go out of my hand."

"There, you see, he knows nothing."

"It was hot work, colonel, under that bastion, but it was hotter to the poor fellows that got in. I heard all about it from Private Dard here."

"So, then, it was you who carried the colors?"

"Yes, I was struck down with the colors of the brigade in my hand," cried La Croix.

"See how people lie about everything, — they told me the colonel carried the colors."

"Why, of course he did. You don't think our colonel, the fighting colonel, would let me hold the colors of the brigade so long as he was alive. No! he was struck by a Prussian bullet, and he had just time to hand the colors to me, and point with his sword to the bastion, and down he went. It was hot work, I can tell you. I did not hold them long, not thirty seconds, and, if we could know their history, they passed through more hands than that, before they got to the Prussian flag-staff."

Raynal suddenly rose, and walked rapidly to and fro, with his hands behind him.

"Poor colonel," continued La Croix, "well, I love to think he died like a soldier, and not like some of my poor comrades, hashed to atoms, and not a volley fired over him. I hope they put a stone over him, for he was the best soldier and the best general in the army."

"O sir!" cried Josephine, "there is no stone even to mark the spot where he fell"; and she sobbed despairingly.

"Why, how is this, Private Dard?" inquired La Croix, sternly.

Dard apologized for the sergeant. Since his wound, his memory comes and goes.

"Now, sergeant, did n't I tell you the colonel must have got the better of his wound, and got into the battery?"

"It 's false, Private Dard, don't I know our colonel better than that? Would ever he have let those colors out of his hand, if there had been an ounce of life left in him?"

"He died at the foot of the battery, I tell you."

"Then why did n't you find him?"

Here Jacintha put in a word with the quiet, subdued meaning of her class: —

"I can't find that anybody ever saw the colonel dead."

"They did not find him, because they did not look for him," said Sergeant La Croix.

"God forgive you, sergeant," said Dard, with some feeling. "Not look for *our colonel!* We turned over every body that lay there, — full thirty there were, — and you were one of them."

"Only thirty! why, we settled more Prussians than that, I 'll swear. O, the enemy had carried them off."

"Ay! but I don't see why they should carry our colonel off. His epaulets were all the thieves could do any good with. Stop! yes, I do, Private Dard; I have a horrible suspicion. No! I have not, — it is a certainty. What, don't you see, ye muff? thunder and thousands of devils, here 's a disgrace. Dogs of Prussians, they have got our colonel, — they have taken him prisoner."

"O God bless them! O God bless the mouth that tells me so. O sir, I am his wife, his poor, heart-broken wife. You would not be so cruel as to mock my despair. Say again that he may be alive, — pray say it again!"

"His wife! Private Dard, why did n't you tell me? Yes, my pretty lady, I 'll say it again, and I 'll prove it. Here is an enemy in full retreat, — would they encumber themselves with the colonel? — if he was dead, they 'd have whipped off his epaulets, and left him there. Alive? — why not? Look at me: I am alive, and I was worse wounded than he was. They took me for dead, you see.

Courage, madame! you will see him again, — take an old soldier's word for it. Dard, attention! this is the colonel's wife."

She gazed on the speaker like one in a trance.

Every eye and every soul had been so bent on Sergeant La Croix, that it was only now Raynal was observed to be missing. The next minute he came riding out of the stable-yard, and went full gallop down the road.

"Ah!" cried Laure, with a burst of hope. "He thinks so too: he has hopes. He has gone somewhere for information. Perhaps to Paris.'

Josephine's excitement, and alternations of hope and fear, were now alarming. Laure held her hand, and implored her to try and be calm till they could see Raynal.

Just before dark he came riding fiercely home. Josephine flew down the stairs. Raynal at sight of her forgot all his caution. He waved his cocked hat in the air. She fell on her knees and thanked God. He gasped out: —

"Prisoner, — exchanged for two Prussian lieutenants, — sent home, — they say he is in France!"

The tears of joy gushed in streams from her.

Some days passed in hope and joy inexpressible; but the good doctor was uneasy for Josephine. She was always listening with supernatural keenness, and starting from her chair: and every fibre of her lovely person seemed to be on the quiver.

Nor was Laure without a serious misgiving. Would husband and wife ever meet? He evidently looked on her as Madame Raynal, and made it a point of honor to keep away from Beaurepaire. They had recourse to that ever-soothing influence, — her child. Thrice a week she went to Frejus, and used to come away brighter and calmer.

One day Laure and she went on foot to Madame Jouvenel, and, entering the house without ceremony, found the nurse out, and no one watching the child.

"How careless!" said Laure.

Josephine stooped eagerly to kiss him. But, instead of kissing him, she uttered a loud cry. There was a locket hanging round his neck.

It was a locket containing some of Josephine's hair and Camille's. She had given it him in the happy days that followed their marriage. She stood gasping in the middle of the room. Madame Jouvenel came running in just at that moment. Josephine, by a wonderful effort over herself, asked her calmly and cunningly: —

"Where is the gentleman who put this locket round my child's neck? I want to speak with him."

Madame Jouvenel stammered and looked confused.

"A soldier, — an officer? — come, tell me."

"Woman," cried Laure, "why do you hesitate? — it is her husband!"

"I guessed as much; but my orders are — and if madame does not love the poor gentleman —"

"Not love him!" cried Laure. "She loves him as no woman ever loved before. She pines for him. She dies for him."

The door of a little back room opened at these words of Laure, and there stood Camille, with his arm in a sling, pale and astounded, but great joy working in his face.

Josephine gave a cry of love that made the other two women weep, and in a moment they were sobbing for joy upon each other's neck.

CHAPTER XLIV.

Away went sorrow, doubt, despair, and all they had suffered. That one moment paid for all. And in that moment of joy and surprise, so great as to be almost terrible, perhaps it was well for Josephine that Camille, weakened by his wound, was quite

overcome, and nearly fainted. She was herself just going into hysterics, but, seeing him quite overcome, she conquered them directly, and mused and soothed, and pitied, and encouraged him instead.

Then they sat hand in hand. Their happiness stopped their very breath. They could not speak. So Laure told him all. He never owned why he had slipped away when he saw them coming. He forgot it. He forgot all his hard thoughts of her. They took him home in the carriage. His wife would not let him out of her sight. For years and years after this she could hardly bear to let him be an hour out of her sight. The world is wide; there may be a man in it who can paint the sudden bliss that fell on these two much-suffering hearts, but I am not that man. This is beyond me. It was not only heaven, but heaven after hell.

Leave we the indescribable and the unspeakable for a moment, and go to a lighter theme.

The day Laure's character was so unexpectedly cleared, Edouard had no opportunity of speaking to her, or a reconciliation would have taken place. As it was, he went home intensely happy. But he did not resume his visits to the chateau. When he came to think calmly over it, his vanity was cruelly mortified. She was innocent of the greater offence; but how insolently she had sacrificed him, his love, and his respect, to another's interest.

More generous thoughts prevailed by degrees. And one day that her pale face, her tears, and her remorse got the better of his offended pride, he found he could forgive her. And he was sure he could not be happy if he did not.

He called, she received him, — how? not on her knees as he expected, but with a stateliness and frozen reserve that gave him a new light as to the ins and outs of female character. In the middle of a grave remonstrance, which he intended to end by forgiving her, she told him that she had been debating *pro* and *con*, whether she could forgive him, and she found she could; but not to such an extent as ever to become his wife.

"Forgive me?" cried he, in great heat. He went into a passion, and could hardly articulate. This gave her an advantage. She remained cold and collected. She told him he had wounded her too deeply by his jealous, suspicious nature.

"Was I not to believe your own lips? Am I the only one who believed you? was I to say, 'She is a liar'?"

"I forgive Colonel Raynal for believing me! He did not know me: but you ought to have known me. It is not as if we had been alone. You were my lover. You should have seen I was forced to deceive poor Raynal: and you had no right to believe your eyes, much less your ears, against my truth!"

Edouard was staggered.

"I did not see it in that light," said he.

"But that is the light I see it in."

"And do you make no excuse for me, Laure? I have been making many for you," said Edouard, humbly.

"I don't know what excuses to make for you, but if you are humble, and ask my pardon, I will try and forgive you, — in time."

"Forgive me, Laure! Your sex are hard to understand. Forgive me!"

"Oh! oh! oh!"

"What is the matter, dear? Why do you cry?"

"What a f—f—fool you are not to see that it is I who am without excuse. You are my betrothed. It was to you I owed my duty, — not to my sister. To you, — the best friend I ever had. O Edouard! I am wicked, — unhappy, No wonder you can't forgive me."

"I do forgive you." He caught her in his arms. "There, no more about forgiveness, my betrothed, —

my wife; let our contention be which shall love the other best."

"O, I know how that will be!" said Laure, smiling with joy, and swallowing a great sob; "you will love me best till you have got me, and then I shall love you best," said the discerning toad.

These two were a happy pair. This wayward, but generous heart never forgot her offence, and his forgiveness. She gave herself to him, heart and soul, at the altar, and well she redeemed her vow. He rose high in political life: and paid the penalty of that sort of ambition. His heart was often sore. But by his own hearth sat comfort and ever-ready sympathy. Ay, and patient industry to read blue books, and a ready hand and brain to write diplomatic notes for him, off which the mind glided as from a ball of ice.

In thirty years she never once mentioned the servants to him!

O let eternal honor crown her name!

It was only a little bit of heel that Dard had left in Prussia. More fortunate than his predecessor (Achilles), he got off with a slight but enduring limp. And so the army lost him.

He married Jacintha, and Josephine set them up in Byot's (deceased) *auberge*. Jacintha shone as a landlady, and custom flowed in. For all that, a hankering after Beaurepaire was observable in her. Her favorite stroll was into the Beaurepaire kitchen, and on all *fêtes* and grand occasions she was prominent in gay attire as a retainer of the house. The last specimen of her homely sagacity I shall have the honor to lay before you is a critique upon her husband, which she vented six years after marriage.

"My Dard," said she, "is very good as far as he goes. What he has felt himself, that he can feel for: nobody better. You come to him with an empty belly, or a broken head, or all bleeding with a cut, or black and blue, and you shall find a friend. But if it is a sore heart, or trouble, and sorrow, and no hole in your carcass to show for it, you had better come to me, for you might as well tell your grief to a stone wall as to my man."

The baroness took her son Raynal to Paris, and there, with keen eye, selected him a wife. She proved an excellent one. It would have been hard if she had not, for the baroness, with the severe sagacity of her age and sex, had set aside as naught a score of seeming angels, before she could suit herself with a daughter-in-law. At first Raynal very properly kept clear of the Dujardins, but when both had been married some years, the recollection of that fleeting and nominal connection waxed faint, while the memory of great benefits conferred on both sides remained lively as ever in hearts so great, and there was a warm, a sacred friendship between the two houses, — a friendship of the ancient Greeks, not of the modern club-house.

Camille and Josephine were blessed almost beyond the lot of humanity: none can really appreciate sunshine but those who come out of the cold dark. And so with happiness. For years they could hardly be said to live like mortals: they basked in bliss But it was a near thing. They but just scraped clear of life-long misery, and death's cold touch grazed them both as they went.

Yet they had heroic virtues to balance White Lies in the great Judge's eye.

Have you great heroic virtues? — no? — then remember Ananias and Sapphira. They died for a single White Lie, — a White Lie as common as dirt.

Have you great heroic virtues? — yes? — then do not nullify or defile them by White Lies, but gild them bright as the sun with Truth.

THE END

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